

***A** memory that still haunts me is when my lil' brother died. Every night I just dream about my brother and what we'd be doing if he was still on earth.*

The thing that bothers me is that I seen him the day he died. . . He looked so happy when I always came to the house.

read the rest of Lil' Marcus' POW on page 7



Hello Beat editorial note readers. Yes indeed there was no publication last week. Yeah, it was a short holiday week but with all good intentions we wanted to have an issue for you, but it just didn't happen, when we learned Monday morning that we lost our young colleague and friend to the streets. RIP. A young colleague who like many young people who are lost to the streets, deserved so much more in life.

At this time. Out of respect for the family, we would rather not be too specific until we get permission from the family to speak on one's passing. Well like when anyone dies that you know, it catches you way off guard. It brings great sadness. It's like a blindside punch to the gut. You don't see it coming and it hurts like hell. Yet, once you have a chance to reflect on the death, it gives you time to reflect on your own life and for most to actually say how fortunate we are to be alive.

So here we are with our latest issue on the eve of the last month of the 2007 season. Can you believe how fast this year has gone by? We can only hope many of you have had a decent year considering the predicament you are/were in. We wonder what 2008 will bring us, let alone the month of December? Time will tell.

We touch on this often, but for years now we have read many painful tributes in *The Beat* from the lost homie(s), brothers, sisters, elders and many loved ones who left us too soon. We know how death hurts. We have read many pieces from you where we never even met your special homie, friend and/or family member and have found ourselves in tears. Sadly, death is the darkest topic that is addressed in our issue and it finds itself on almost every single page of each *Beat* each and every week. There is no escaping the cruel reality too many of us are facing and have to learn how to live with for the remainder of our lives, especially the loss of our young friends to the violence in the streets.

There is no escaping, the hood sickness in our neighborhoods that plagues many, many people, particularly us readers of *The Beat Within*. There is no escaping, that drugs and guns play a major role in this epidemic. There is no escaping, these are some dark times, we believe some of the darkest times we have ever been a part of. There is no escaping that many of us who have witnessed death firsthand have had no time to heal or receive the necessary counseling and support to learn how to live with the pain and begin anew. There is no escaping that most of us will return to the same neighborhoods where death, violence, drugs, homelessness, and hate continues, and we are faced to have to try and change our ways or return to jail. Speaking of jail, there is no escaping who is sitting in jail cells throughout this great land of ours! With that said, there is no escaping that we live in a society where one group of people are suppose to be our leaders for tomorrow, while another group is suppose to have a hell of a time surviving day to day. This is the great tragedy that there is no equality in the land of the free, which brings plenty of hate, greed, and envy.

We suppose, the only way we can make change, is to challenge each and every one of you to do your socially conscious part by raising your voice for others to hear and read. Challenge us all to think global! Think big! Think change! Think life! Think love! Challenge us students and us open-minded folk to see there is more to life than simply us the individual. Is it possible, sure,

anything is possible even in these desperate times.

We are an optimistic bunch aren't we!? Shhh, given this line of work we do, we better have plenty of hope to share, plus that's why we got into this work, because we believe you readers and writers definitely have the answers when it comes to bettering your community, bettering your self, improving the criminal justice system! What better teachers than you Beaters, who have the first hand experience of the darkness and loneliness of the criminal justice system! What you offer is great insight that no expert can truly offer, unless he or she has been on the road you are on. You know what's broken. You know the b-s from the real! You know more than most so-called professionals will give you credit for. Again, that's why we cherish *The Beat Within* as a priceless publication that deserves more credit than it gets, 'cause it is the ultimate history book of the week, breaking down your truths each and every week for over twelve years now!

This week our topics addressed in workshops prior to the writing that is featured in this fabulous issue are, "An elder" - Tell us about that special elder in your life, whether it's your grandparents, an old homeless veteran you pass daily on your way to school, or simply an old friend, who no matter what they say you hold onto as the truth. They're people who've lived a long life and have done so for a reason. They've experienced much more than we've experienced and in their experiences they've come out with lessons on the other side. They have lived more life than we have, they've seen more, heard more, and even felt more than we have at this point of our lives. This week we want to hear from you about a special elder who has sprinkled you with love and wisdom as your mentor, guardian angel, role model, you know the one who has such a powerful presence in your life. Tell us about your important elder.

The second topic, "Disappointment" - How do you deal with disappointment? When there is a situation that does not work out how do you address your feelings? How do you react to disappointment? Do you get angry? Does it make you try harder to better yourself? How do you resolve your feelings? Who has disappointed you or have you disappointed anyone? This week breakdown disappointment and how it has played a part in your life.

Our third topic, the very popular, "What Is A Memory That Still Haunts You?" Our brains carry lots of memories - from our early childhood days to what was going on in your life an hour ago. This week, given Halloween is right around the corner, we want to hear from you about a memory that continues to disturb, scare, or bother you no matter what you do.

The last topic, "If Your Pet Could Talk" - We do all kinds of things when we're alone where we live or where we stay - but maybe we're not as "alone" as we think we are... If you have a pet, what kinds of stories would he dish about you if he could speak? What opinions might she have about things? If you don't have a pet, try seeing the world through the eyes of your neighbor's pet or an animal roaming the streets. Tell *The Beat Within* the stories they would tell.

All right Beat editorial note readers this issue goes out to all the lost souls written about in this issue. We send our good thoughts to their families and friends. With that said, we so look forward to hearing from you in the coming weeks.

The Beat Within, a weekly newsletter of writing and art by incarcerated youth, is published by Pacific News Service.

At The Beat Within, we go through a lot of trouble to censor inappropriate sexual remarks, foul language, and gang references. There is enough tension in our communities already—we don't aim to bolster it. It is in The Beat's interest to promote peace and unity. Our goal is to educate one another.

The Beat Within publishes the opinions and views expressed by the participants in our workshops. This is simply the pure voice of the youth. The views you read do not necessarily reflect those of the publisher, editor or staff. All rights are reserved. Nothing from this publication can be reproduced without our written permission.

To our writers: What you write could be hazardous to you. Your words have consequences, and could be used to incriminate you. Try to illuminate your feelings and viewpoints without running the risk of providing ammunition for those who might use your words against you.

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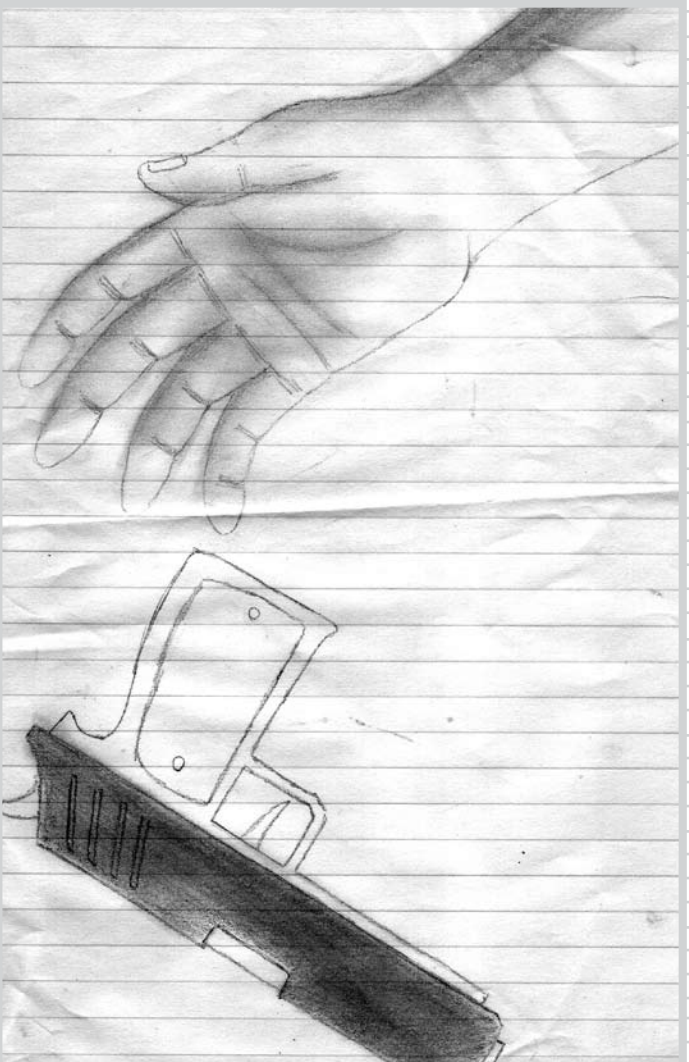
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The Beat Without 55



Super Staff

What's up wit' The Beat? Me, still up in here fighting my case. I would write about one of the topics, but this been on my mind all day: Super Staff.

When I say that, I don't mean good staff. I already wrote about that. But I'm getting tired of these staff that still want to treat you like less than a human. I been in here for going on seven months now, and it's still a couple staff I can't get along with, no matter how much I try. I mean they would come to work with problems and do everything they can to make your time worse than it already is. And I'm not talking about two or three times. I'm talking about almost every time they come to work!

When I come out to breakfast I could be having an ok day and I say good morning to the staff, and this jerk staff start talking shhh. And all I said was good morning. Then I could be standing on the line and waiting on pencils, and I'll be getting ready to pick up one, and he'll ask me the dumbest question, like, "What do you think your doing?" I would look like, "Is he serious?" and get ready to say something, and decide against it because I don't want unnecessary room time.

See, room time don't bother me, but I would try to get a book call, and I know he would not let me get one because he would rather me sit in my room with nothing to do. I could hit push ups but eventually I would get tired.

Some staff act like their job is hard when the most they have to do is push buttons and at worse break up a fight. But they can get help for that. They act like they the ones in the room or the ones that got to go through the courts and stuff. Everybody know I don't cause no trouble or nothing. It ain't 'cause I'm a punk, 'cause I ain't, but my case is serious and I be trying to get credits.

But if I didn't have this serious charge and wasn't facing all the time I am, a lot would be different. I can control my anger though. Today he was bad-mouthing me, and I just stared at him. He asked me was there a problem, and I said no. The teacher said that was foul because she knows I don't get into hella trouble, but still here a lot of smack. I just wonder if these super staff would act like that on da outs when they really see what's good wit' you and they're not protected by the walls. But that also goes for the detainees that think they tough.

-Gold M, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's hard to imagine giving another Beat writer a POW for tackling this very sensitive subject. But you keep your cool and explain exactly what you're talking about, without naming names or calling names (except for the one we had to take out...). We also admire you for being able to control your reactions, even when you know the staff is coming up foul. About a hundred years ago, a British historian named Lord Acton wrote, "Power tends to corrupt; absolute power corrupts absolutely." Do you think the way these particular staff act are examples of what Lord Acton meant?

An Elder

One of the special elders in my life would be my case manager Delvin. He's one of the best case managers I've worked with. He never gave up on me. When I was not going to school and doing bad on probation, he got me back on my feet and got me going to school. I was going through a lot of things and he was one of the people that I could open up to. He's not one of those case managers that are just doing their jobs, but one of those who cares and wants to help change lives. He's definitely one of the role models and mentors in my life.

-Ramon, San Francisco

From The Beat: It is so nice to find someone who truly appreciates the efforts of some to help them, and who expresses that appreciation so well. We hope that you learn to care for yourself as much as you say Delvin cares for you, so that you don't find yourself back in this situation in the future. That would be the best "thank you" he could ever get.

My Memory

I was three years old when I was not doing what I'm supposed to do.

Me, my cousin, and two other friends were being bad and not listening. We went across the street when we weren't supposed to and we found some baby birds (chicks) in a tree. We took all of them, -it was about eight of them. We gave them some water and other stuff and we went to my friend's house because he raised chickens and roosters.

He is from Vietnam, so he raised different types of animals.

We crossed the parking lot, which we weren't supposed to do, and went to his house and he gave the birds some things to eat.

We left his house and went to another parking lot where my cousin lived. In the street, we saw my favorite person come in from the side-gate in his blue 5.0 Mustang. Coming real fast behind him was the same type of car, but it was light-brown, like a tan. A guy we knew jumped from out of my favorite person's car, and he start doing donuts while the other car started shooting at him. We were young so we stood there and watched. They kept shooting while they seen us there. He was swangin it for his life while his daughter was in the car.

When they left, everybody walked to his car and he was dead.

-Jonathan, Alameda

From The Beat: Your story made this editor cry, for you and your young friends, for the man who got ambushed, and for his daughter. Did she get shot? Do you think about this day often? Do you know what the shooting was about? Probably not, given you were three. Did you feel scared walking around your neighborhood after that? How has this murder effected your young life?

The Memory Of My Mom

A memory that haunts me still is that my mom used to use drugs. I would look into her eyes and know that she's on crack cocaine.

It would hurt me so bad that I would cry to her and ask: "Mom, why do you do this to yourself?"

I would lie awake, crying the whole night, thinking to myself: "Does she like to see me cry?"

And there would be nights when I would come home and she wouldn't be there. I would wonder: "Is my mom coming home today?" But she wouldn't come. I would stay up the whole night just to see if she would walk in the door, but she never did. I would cry and tell myself I have to help my mom before I lose her to a drug. So, I would try to help her but she didn't want it.

A couple of months passed and I wouldn't see my mom and I would think: "Is my mom ok? When will she come home?" She'd come home, but she would leave the same day or a week later, and would be gone for months, and that's when she finally stopped coming home.

After a year passed I thought: "Where's my mom? She never would just abandon us would she?" That's when it hit me she's not coming back after a whole year.

And it was only a couple months ago when my sister Rosalinda called me and told me that she found my mom. After she told me, I started crying. She told me she was in rehab and that she was sober, but if I think that if anything happened, would she run back to that drug again? That's a memory that still haunts me till this day.

-Vivian, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thank you so much for sharing this intense memory about your mother. Her being in rehab sounds like a positive change. Perhaps you can really help each other stay out of trouble.

To Be Real

What is it to be real? Is it to be hard?
 Is it represent "yo" block and gangbang on the yard?
 Is bein' real selling dope over there on that corna?
 Is bein' real poppin' pills, drankin' and smokin'
 marijuana?
 Ya say a man is fake if he ain't bustin' the steel
 So does doin' life in prison for murder make you real?
 A lot of y'all answer to these questions sadly is "Yes."
 You guys think livin' life in the 'hood and bangin' is the
 best
 But all of you guys are absolutely wrong and incorrect
 You know you are too—that's why you get mad when
 people try to put you in check
 You feel like they are criticizing you when they really
 tryna help
 But you continue to ignore them, and all you doin' is
 disrespectin' yo'self
 Bein' real ain't havin' guns or bein' the big man on the
 block
 Bein' real is bein' yo'self and not tryna to be somebody
 you not
 That's when a lot of ya doin' ya, tryna to be cool and fit
 in
 Ya try to copy the next man's style. A world full of twins
 you live in
 Look at all of you, all with Girbauds, Js, grills, wearin'
 blue or red
 The thing that's really hilarious is how all of you want to
 have dreads
 Soundin' like some straight females always talkin' about
 hair and dyes
 Always twistin' your hairs, advising others to twist them
 clockwise

-Savioso, San Francisco

From The Beat: This is a fine piece of thinking as well as writing! If you are as wise as this piece sounds, how did you blow it? We all make mistakes, so we're not judging you, just hoping that whatever mistake you made you've learned how to avoid in the future. It's rare to have someone your age stand apart from the expected, the routine, the standard, and speak truth! You've done it here, and you have made fans of us! Keep teaching!

Why Do Angels Have To Cry?

Why does life have to be so painful?
 Because God made it this way.
 Why my potnas gotta die at a young age?
 'Cause he was at the wrong place at the wrong time with
 the wrong group.
 Why is life so important?
 Because people live and leave memories when It's time
 to go.
 Why I got to be in jail doing grown man time?
 'Cause I made the decision to live my life in the fast
 lane.
 Why people got to be fake?
 'Cause people try to hard to be someone they ain't.
 Why do people hate?
 'Cause people get jealous of another person.
 Why does jail got to be exactly like hell?
 Because life is death. Why? Why? Why? Why do angels
 have to cry? Because life is nothing but time.

-J-Money, Alameda

From The Beat: "In the prison of his days/Teach the free man how to praise." That's from the first poem we'll be sending you in your new place of residence. And it's about how no matter how painful it gets, the human spirit can carry us through it. Keep your spirit strong. Peace.

I Got It...But Now I Don't Want It

Such a young one, a dumb one, yet so smart but wanted to be someone. Couldn't resist looking at all the big kids without wanting to become one.

Do this, do that, impress and get your act out on the stage. One's own messages become subliminal and turn one's self into a criminal.

Can't reveal the truth, so there's no reason to act your age. Missed out because you skipped out. Can't understand things anymore, so out of nowhere you just flipped out. Emotions were best behind so when the pain strikes it hurts and now you need to shape up before you get skipped out.

Eighteen now and almost impossible to find tranquility. There's too much to handle. I don't want to grow up. I want to get back to the life that doesn't ask for responsibility.

-Lewis, Dakota County, Hastings, Minnesota

From The Beat: Lewis very in depth and very good. Responsibility does come upon us rather quickly. Unfortunately the older we get the more responsibility we get. But this is something not to be afraid of but rather something we can embrace and know that you will make it through. Even if it has to be one day at a time.

The Next Few Months Of My New Life

I am finna be shipped to Philly for the next six-seven months of my life. I really ain't feelin' it, but the situation I am in I just got to rock wit' it. It could have been worse, but I got blessed. So I am just gone show my gratitude by doing a good program.

The pros for me going is that I am going to be able to graduate from high school. They are also gone give me a scholarship to college, which I am very excited about. The cons are me going way on the East Coast, too far away from my comfort zone. I am also gone miss out on my senior year. But for the most part it is a good thing for the thug.

-Knowledge, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think you've really lived up to your Beat name in this piece, Knowledge. We can definitely understand your anxiety about going away so far from home and the things you know the most. But we really admire your willingness to take a deep breath and take advantage of the good things this situation presents for you. It seems like you are thinking about your long-term future success, and that attitude will serve you well as you walk into an unfamiliar world. We hope you keep writing us when you get wherever you're going, and spit some of that Knowledge our way. Good luck!

I Want To Be Innocent

Seems like yesterday
 All innocent
 Waking up and watching cartoons
 Eating cereal in my jammies.
 Calling my friends and asking if they can play.
 Now I hit them up and see if they wanna chill.
 It doesn't make sense.
 I don't make sense.
 I don't know how it happened.
 But I want to go back.
 I want to be innocent.
 But now they have said I'm guilty.
 But I want to be innocent.
 I want to be a kid again.

-Keith, Dakota County, Hastings, Minnesota

From The Beat: Keith I'm sure we can all relate (or most of us) to wanting to be a kid again watching cartoons and not having a care in the world. Now that you are in the situation you are in you have the opportunity to make that change within yourself to reclaim some of the "innocence" that was lost. It is not possible to be a kid again but you can be a kid at heart and make the changes now in your life for a better future.

Goodbye Brother

Today was a sad day for me, from now on I'll be at Camp Sweeney . It's good not to be in Juvenile Hall, but the sad part about leaving was I had to say goodbye to my brother Johnny. I'm going to miss that little mother... a lot!

As we said our goodbyes, my heart stopped beating and Johnny started crying. I love Johnny, I'm gonna miss him, I don't want him to go to the pen. He doesn't belong there. As I gave him my last hug that I'll give him in awhile, I emotionally said, "stay strong brother... I'll see you in no time." I wanted to cry so bad, but I don't want to cry. Not even at funerals. It's crazy, I know. People tell me there's something wrong with me. But something is wrong with them, for saying something is wrong with me.

I remember when James, Lil' B, Johnny and I were always together when we were youngstas. We wild out a lot of times, starting trouble, picking fights. James was the one who brought ideas up; he was basically the hype man of us all. Lil' Bee was the brains of the crew; though quiet he was also vicious at the same time. Johnny was the one that was always down no matter what it was; he was ready for anything. And me, well let's just say I was the "baby" of the crew. I was the youngest, but also the biggest.

And now I'll be in Camp for the next six months. As for Johnny and James, they'll be doing quite some time. James is looking at five to ten years in prison. I love him and I'm going to miss him a lot. James was a fugitive from the CYA, and he was recently arrested for a home invasion. Johnny was arrested for the robbery of three banks; I'm goin' to miss them both. All of my bra-bras gone, I stay in a bad mood. We used to be the "squad" when we were out, now everything is just slowly falling apart. My life's going downhill, everything's coming out of place.

I miss just walking down the street. I miss using my own toilet, sink and shower. I hate this place, but it seems like this will be my home for the next six months. I miss "my home." I miss my school. I miss my teachers. I miss the taste of real food. And most of all, I miss family, especially my newborn niece and nephew. They're my little angels.

The girl's name is Taylin Van, and the boy's name is Kesien Van. Yes, they're twins. I know it's a blessing. I only got the chance to see them for only five months. Hopefully I'll be free by their 1st birthday. I'll feel like a complete a-hole if I'm locked up and couldn't make it. Life's hard --no one ever said it was goin' to be easy. The stress comes along with it. I can't let it get the best of me.

-Lil' Mang, Alameda

From The Beat: Thanks for this powerful testimony to the friends you've left behind, and to Johnny, who has been a great writer for The Beat and a beloved member of your unit for a long time. You have a lot of pressure on you - so many loved ones locked away, so many loved ones still praying for you, and especially so many regrets in your own life. But you also have great heart and potential, when we read your pieces, we are always inspired by the way you continue to seek out your own truth, and your own answers for how to be in this world. In another piece, you said you wanted to be a teacher one day. We just want to let you know, even while you're still a student of life, the teacher in you already shows!

I guess I burned the bridges one too many times.

Now, I sit on the sidelines watching you cry.

Tito, My Dog

My dog's name is Tito, he's half pit and half boxer - so he's kinda big but he's so crazy. He'll follow me around the house, 'till I bend down and say "hi" to him. I guess it's 'cause I'm like never home and he misses me.

I saved him from a family that hit him all the time. So, I think my dog sees and hears a lot of things that I don't think anyone knows, like when I'm on the phone, he'll come sit next to me or follow me around so he hears when I'm planning to leave or planning to do something. He would even push the bathroom door open when I'm taking a shower, then when I'm doing my make-up and hair.

I remember this one day I was planning to sneak out and go to this party that my mom didn't want me to go to. So I waited till it was like 11:00 pm, and my family was asleep and I got up and went into the bathroom to do my hair with my straightener and it wasn't on the counter. I looked all over the house for it and couldn't find it anywhere so I thought my mom hid it from me. So, I decided to do something else with my hair.

I went to my room and laid out the clothes I was going to wear and the shoes, then I went back in the bathroom to do my make up and when I finished with that - I went back into my room and my right shoe was missing. I then started looking all over the place for that and I couldn't find it anywhere inside the house, so I got a different pair to wear.

Then my phone rang and I went to answer it and I couldn't find it but I could hear it. I could hear it right outside my window, so I went into the backyard and there was my straightener, my shoe and my phone!

-Gough, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, this is a really interesting story. It seems like Tito was almost like an older brother who was looking out for you and making sure you didn't get in trouble. Pets can be so human-like.

Nana

I got arrested after being out for two weeks only.
Went to court the next day and you weren't there; I felt lonely.

I guess I burned the bridges one too many times.

Now, I sit on the sidelines watching you cry.

You've been there for me so many times.

It hurts me inside to see you this way, but yet I continue to commit my crimes.

It kills me inside every time you see me in chains as I walk through the court doors.

I see the pain in your eyes.

That slowly brings tears to mine.

I remember the day they came and took me away.

I couldn't believe that once again I brought you misery.

Now, I sit here wondering every day;

Wondering if you believe in me or not or still want me away.

Waiting here for CPS to come get me; please don't let them take me away.

I know I've said this a million times, but I promise this time I'll change.

-Babyboo, Durango, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: We're glad you recognize the pain that your actions have brought to those who care about you. We hope you also realize that you are the only one who can control whether or not it happens again. As much as your family may love you, there's a certain point where they may have to draw the line and not allow you to return home for your own good, as well, as theirs. Only you can prevent that from happening. Stop promising to change and just do it!

My Great Grandmother

My great-Grandmother is an elder person that – even though she has passed and gone – she will always remain in my heart!

To remind myself of her and what she meant to me I got her name tattooed on my right forearm. She always taught me that life's ups and downs will come and go, but the lesson that they teach us will never fade away.

I promised her that I would never be another statistic and I failed to keep my promise. I regret what I did to get in here but I can't change my past – only my future.

If I could talk to my great grandma, she would tell me to learn from my mistakes and move forward. My father always told me it takes a boy to get knocked down but a man to get up and keep fighting and learn from his mistakes that got him knocked down the first time.

Big Mama, I will learn from my mistakes and you was right – life's ups and downs they come and go, but the lessons they teach us will never fade. I love you.

-Young B, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Wow, this is such a heartfelt piece that shows your love for your Great-Grandmother and that you really learned from her.

The New Me

Dear Tyrece,

I like the new person that you have become. You're not into your old ways. You're finally growing-up and seeing the real world as a man. You don't do the things you used to do or kick it with the same people. You have become a sophisticated man that is taking responsibility. You finally see the light and no longer have time for nonsense and games. You see that this is real life and that you aren't going down the same path. You are getting smarter and wiser and I see success in your future. I can see that you are dealing with the things that you are going through and that you can see an end to them. So continue to do right and you will succeed.

-Tyrece, SEF, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: If you have become this person, then congratulations! This new you sounds like he has a bright future ahead of him. If you are still working toward becoming this person, don't give up. You can and will achieve this mature, new you.

Grandma's Strength

My grandma is like my angel, she always seems to point me in the right way.

My grandma has had so many wrecks with life, and for her to be so old she's very strong.

My grandma is like a check that comes right on time. She is like the key to start my engine and she never fails to relate. She is full of wisdom which she tires to give to me every day. She's so holy, so kind, and so pure that it's hard for God to take her away.

Her ways and her mind have such a big affect on me and she allows me to be myself.

I ask my grandma how she stays so strong and so peaceful through all the worlds' problems, her reply, "As long as I got God, my freedom, and my health, I don't need anything else." Thank you, grandma for making me the man I am today.

- Reggie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's good to have a strong positive influence in your life, now it's up to you to use that knowledge to better your life. If you use this knowledge in a negative way you will only find yourself on the wrong side of the law, but if you use it in a positive way only good things could happen.

The Day My Lil Brother Died

A memory that still haunts me is when my lil' brother died. Every night I just dream about my brother and what we'd be doing if he was still on earth.

The thing that bothers me is that I seen him the day he died. When I was in Oakland I was hanging out with him, and watching TV. I had went to Micky D's to get him and my mom some burgers before I left to San Leandro to my Auntie's house. He looked so happy when I always came to the house.

I ain't gon' lie, but I wasn't the best brother. I used to spend most of my time at my homie's crib. I used to mostly just call my mom and tell her where I was at. When my auntie came to pick me up, my mom told me that my brother wanted to come with me. Back then I did not want to be bothered with no lil' kids. Not that I didn't like him, it's just I wanted to have time to myself, but today I really regret it. When I told my mom no, my lil' brother had started crying, saying "I want to go with Marcus." So when we left I was thinking about it the whole time on the way.

Late that night, I had woken up because I went to sleep early. I saw my mom, aunty, grand-auntie crying in the living room. I had asked them what happened. They said that my lil' brother passed away. I didn't believe it, because I had seen him that day.

That's what really woke me up. I was so angry, I was blaming myself, saying that if I would have took him with me, that whole night I couldn't sleep.

Until this day, I can't really get over it and every time I think about it, it angers me. That's what really haunts me.

-Lil' Marcus, Alameda

From The Beat: It's tragic that you lost your brother, especially since he loved you so much, and, we can tell, you loved him so much too. But Marcus, you haven't forgiven yourself for his death, and we wish you would believe us when we tell you – it is not your fault. These terrible things happen, and when we lose someone we love, we all think, oh, if I'd have done X differently, maybe it wouldn't have happened. But you could never have known what was going to happen that day, and we hope you do forgive yourself. Thank you for this haunting, heartfelt piece.

He's A Criminal Now

Let me tell you 'bout a child

That grew up in the hood, by age five he
Was doing things that he probably never should,
Inhaling weed, smoke from the homies at the park,

His brothers were there but they never
Played the part, by age ten he was already making
Bad decisions, drinking beers with his friends
And joining on the missions, although getting
Kicked out of school wasn't his thing that all

Changed when he started banging hard as
A teen, walking down the halls searching
For the enemy, his mom cries 'cause she
Knows he's heading for the penitentiary,
He even knows that he's not there mentally,
Well now he's sixteen and got even more raw
His son's a month old now, but that don't
Stop 'em at all, and now he can't do nothing
But face the law 'cause now he's starin'

At the juvenile hall walls.

-Goofy Maux, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is one of the darkest first chapters of a life story we've ever read. [The only real brightness to it is the skill you show as a writer, which makes us think of how much you have inside you that could make you successful]... It's also just the first chapter. When you imagine what the next chapter will look like, what do you see? Especially now that you've got a baby of your blood, waiting for his daddy's love?

Family

Then there's my family. My family has been going through worse times because I'm in here. I have five siblings in my family. The oldest is Arthur. He's 26 years old, my brother. He's my best friend. Even though we are eight years apart we have that bond. My brother will always be there for me through thick and thin.

Then there's my older sister. She's blood. Her name is Danielle. She's 24 and just had a baby. My sister's baby is a couple of months now. My family say the baby looks like me when I was a baby. It's weird... well not really. The baby's name is named after me, baby Daniel.

Well, my sister is really supportive since she writes me a lot and I love her even though she used to beat me up when I was little, ha ha. She was mean, but now she is a very independent woman.

Then there's my lil' brother Joel. He's 12 years old and there's not much to say about him. We never really got along. I think it's 'cause he was younger, but I can say that I love him. I am proud of him. He made it to middle school. It got me happy because I know he is going to succeed in life.

Then there's the woman that will always love me no matter what happens. It's my beautiful mother Christina. My mom has been through a lot with me, to visit me. My mom has never doubted me and she never will. When my mom found out I was using drugs, she tried to help me regain my life, mentally and physically. My mother — I love you.

There's my pops. Not much to say about him. He left when I was two years old, but he comes to visit me and I guess I can I love him. My dad was a druggie and an alcoholic, that's the reason why he left.

That's my family, well, my real family. I also have a stepdad who's been in my life since I was five years old, and I have two older step-brothers, but that's like my family. You know, I grew up with them and I love all three of them. They are all supportive in their own little way.

Now that's my family. But then there's me. Well, let me start by saying this, my name is Daniel but

my boys know me as Evek, and the max unit staff and other staff know me as Thirst. So now that you know my name or names, let me tell you a story about a boy who was, but got transformed into a druggie that messed up his life physically and mentally. Here's the story of that boy.

The Beginning

It was July 14, 1989, 7:15 a.m. My parents named me after my father, Daniel Allen Jr. As a young boy growing up in San Jose, there is a lot of drugs where I was growing up. By the time I was two years old, my father was twisted on drugs and alcohol. My mother and father were fighting a lot. That's what I remember when I was little seeing my mother cry on the kitchen floor for so long.

When I was about two and a half my mother finally got sick of my father's games, and my mother and father split. For a couple of years I never seen my dad, never. But I started to get older, my mother thought it would be best to have my father come and pick me up for the day.

Not too soon, my mother met a man, Jose S. When I was five years old, Jose had two boys already, Jose Jr. and Sebastian. Pepe, which is lil' Jose was seven or eight years old at the time, and Sebastian was six years old. Little did I know that these three people were my future family.

I remember when I was young, my older brother wasn't really around. My brother was out doing his own thing, getting caught up. Then it was my sister who was next. She ran away and I remember it was my mother and I who went out to look for her. All of the nights we went out were very long.

When I turned seven, my brother and sister were home. They finally both came back. Once my brother was back, he was smoking weed. For some reason, one day I was out on the porch of my house and my brother was sparking up a joint for him to smoke with his boy. Since I was there, my brother decided to let me try. I got high in one hit and I can say I was trippin'.

When I was eight years old, I started to skateboard. That was my passion. When I was little I wanted to become a pro just like all the famous skaters. I remember my favorite skater, too. It was Donny Barley. I remember my first board was a Barley pro model.

Well, once I got to fifth grade, I had a cool-ass teacher named Mr. Park at Hacienda Elementary. I only remember one week specifically, and it was just crazy, well to me, because I was so young I wasn't going to school for one whole week. That week I was at my house with my older brother and my older sister and it was chaos, people smoking different kinds of drugs.

(To Be Continued...)

-Thirst, Santa Clara

From The Beat: We are very eager to read the "to be continued" part of this autobiography. We've learned a lot about your family from this piece of history that you've written. It's the kind of writing we wish more Beat writers would do — no boasting about your boys or lifestyle, no clichés (like, "they can't hold me forever"), no fronting — just an honest description of your past. We're very curious about the next stage of your life, and about what you see after this sad experience is over. You are a talented writer, Evek (Thirst, Daniel) revealing a keen mind. Those are qualities that can take you very far, if very far is where you want to go...

In Memory of My Twin Brother

A memory that still

Haunts me is my lil' brother Isais.

I still can't believe that he is gone.

But in my heart is where he will stay.

Isais passed away June 16th.

'Till that day I'm still hurting.

I remember that morning phone call.

Like it was yesterday, crying and more crying.

My little brother passed away.

I use to make him as happy as I could get him with money

Or when he wanted to play games.

I remember him trying to impress me

By a football game. He pick my favorite team

Tennessee Titans and he beats his opposite.

But the thing, is his opposite was his twin brother Benny who lost his brother at the only age of eight.

-Ernie, Santa Clara

From The Beat: What a powerful story. Thank you for sharing it — not just the pain of loss but also the detail that, for a minute, made us see what your brother must have been like when he was alive...And also how much of a painful hole he must have left when he was gone. Will you keep writing? Tell us more about him? And about how things changed for you after he passed on?

By the time I was two years old, my father was twisted on drugs and alcohol. My mother and father were fighting a lot.

I'm Gonna Overcome This Cycle

When you have faith in yourself...to have faith in yourself is to be human and only to be human. It's the foundation of why and where faith comes from.

"The principle was that laws are made by mankind to serve mankind but once those laws stop serving mankind in society. It comes upon us to do what we have to do to survive."

People read in the paper that young teens are committing burglary. They don't know why though. I do, because after being broke and seeing other young men with cars, girls and just living the good life, you get just plain tired of being in the ghetto.

That will make a young man rob, kill and steal, and some whites are targeted, because one main reason their ancestors are oppressed our ancestors 400 years ago and when a young man rob, steal burglarize they're not thinking about the law. They're thinking about the good life. Now you see why the crime rate is so high. And me I'ma overcome this cycle 'cause I'm ready to succeed. I learned this from the great teachings of Huey P. Newton, a great leader and revolutionary.

I made choices in the past where I didn't think first. I acted on impulse Mr. Lockart taught me a new thing to do. Instead of acting on impulse:

Stop
Think
React
React.

If I could have did this I would have never committed the crime that I did. Everybody who reads this, stay strong. We're gonna overcome the odds against us and everybody's gonna get out someday. Until then, keep it solid as a rock.

-Young Mari, Alameda

From The Beat: You drop so much game in this piece, we don't even know where to start. We can tell from the quotes that you're doing a lot of reading and growing in here, and yes, those four steps you wrote down could save your life one day. Now that your perspective has changed, do you think you will be as tempted to break the law when you get out? Or do you have new plans to go with your new outlook?

What Are All These People Doing in My Backyard?

Damn... if my pet could talk he would
Say some weird things. I have a dog and
If he could talk he would say, "Hey!..

What are all these people doing in my backyard?

Who is this guy who keeps giving me this drink? It kind of tastes weird and it makes me feel weird."

Damn! These guys are cooking some BBQ! I want some!

This dude keeps trying to wrestle me, I'm going to take him down and bite his nuts off!"

"This guy is angry at me now..."

I'm going to find my master and play with him....

I'm hungry, I need to take a crap.... I'm hungry I want some more of that drink. "

"Why is that girl laying on the ground? Jackpot! I found some throw up! Yay, some more people..."

I hope I get some more food. Or some throw up or some of that drink!"

"Why are people leaving? Why are people sleeping already?

I guess I'm going to piss and sleep next to these guys. Good Night!"

-Viet Tiger, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is great! Funny and inventive and it really showed what your life is like from a different angle... the chaos, the crowds... the barbecue. It's was a classic piece to be read aloud when you did too. Everyone was laughing, a sign of a great storyteller.

Deep Thoughts.

The last couple of days I've had this song stuck in my head, and it actually has me thinking about what will I be facing when I get out. Will someone kill me or will I end up killing someone, or will I be successful in life?

We'll I'm confused because I think either one will happen. I'm stuck between a rock and a hard place, because I'm gang affiliated and we're hated and envied by many people, and everyone's head is on market. I have to protect myself and my squad because they'll do the same thing for me, and to make sure everyone is safe, sometimes it comes to the unthinkable, and it ends up resulting in something that I might regret for the rest of my life. But I'll look at it as I'd rather be locked up than taken on earth and end it early.

I also think I can make it and succeed but now when I have to constantly look over my shoulder to make sure I'm not slippin' well one is getting a job occupancy and going to a community college, but who said something can't happen to you in either place. Nowhere is safe. I don't know, but who knows what the future holds. I just know that I'd rather be caught with one than without one, 'cause it happened before. And I can't let it happen anymore, but success is always a way to a bright future but I'll be damned if I get put out of misery before my time.

-D-Mo, Alameda

From The Beat: You tell a hard truth in this piece. Like one of our old-timers told us the other day: "Just 'cause you leave the streets behind, doesn't mean they leave you behind." Even if you try to turn around, you will still have enemies and unfinished business, and we feel you on the trouble there. But you've written before about other hopes and dreams that you have for yourself. So it seems like you're really torn. Now that your sentence has been lightened, what is your mindset, imagining where you're going?

Disappointed In Him...

What's up, Beat? It be that Vietnamese boy from the max. On this week's topic I am going to write about disappointment.

Well, this happened when I was around fifth grade when my uncle that lives in another city would always abuse me and my older brothers when we would go visit him. It mostly happened when no other grown ups were around. He would tell us if we did tell the grown ups that we got hit by him, he's gonna hit us more. Or, his excuse was that we misbehaved so he hit us. But at the time, I didn't care and also really looked up to him too. He thought he was a bad ass, hella cool and all that shhhh.

But until this one year where I was in seventh grade, I went to go visit him, and my grandpa and aunts alone. Everyone left the house, so it was only me and my uncle there. He started to throw me on the floor and beat me like never before. He grabbed my hair and slammed it to the ground and even put clothing around a pipe and beat me and said it was to not leave me bruises while laughing.

At the end he would take me in the garage, give me a cigarette, and told me he beat me to make me tougher, to feel no pain if someone gets in a fight with me. I was really disappointed in him after that for someone I have as a family that beat me like that, and now I hate that mofo.

To everyone that's locked up and all the Vietnamese boys, keep y'all head up! Take care.

-Viet Ox, Santa Clara

From The Beat: If your uncle couldn't understand why his job is to protect you from the world's beatings (and never to hurt you), then maybe he would understand that what he did is a criminal offense which could carry serious consequences for him. In any case, no child deserves to be beaten, though many are. You cannot undo that past, but you can make sure that you never abuse a child. Thank you for sharing this painful memory with The Beat.

Panhandle

I remember not too long ago, me and my buddy were at the bus stop and we had no money. So we decided to panhandle to come up on bus money. We got enough money for the bus, but some homeless guy was at the corner and as we were walking by, he gave us three dollars and we walked away.

But we felt bad and walked back and gave him his money back, and told him, "God bless you, but we would rather you have this." And he smiled at us and we felt really good, but bad at the same time because he was such a good person but he was homeless.

And I'm pretty sure I will remember that guy for the rest of my life because even though he had no money, his heart was big enough to give anyways, and that really made me think.

-Kohden, Santa Clara

From The Beat: From this bitter-sweet memory you have created art! Your homeless man with the big heart will not only live in your memory, but in the memories of everyone who reads this fine piece. (It tells us something good about your heart, too.)

RIP Kurt

A memory that still haunts me is my brother's death. He died in a car accident in March 2007. He was 21.

I heard about his death from a lady who came to my home. I opened the door and she handed me my brother's cell phone. I then spoke to my brother's friend who told me that he died in a car crash.

I feel bad because we were not talking. We were not speaking for the two weeks before his death. Kurt, my brother, he used to take me to the sideshows and every chance we got to be together we had fun. Now he's gone. Kurt died on 03/2/07.

His funeral was the day before my birthday. I felt bad losing my brother still and it always will hurt me.

I loved my brother. RIP Kurt.

-Lil' Rodolfo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Your brother loved you and you loved him, and even if you were having troubles right when he died, that love is stronger than any little fight that might have happened. Tell us more about him - what kind of advice did you used to get from him? In what ways were you most similar, most different?

Memories Of A Gun War

I remember that it was me and my friend and a gun war against another 'hood. When we were in the war one of my close friends got shot in the back of the head by one of the other hood guys.

My friend did not make it and it was sad to me to see my friend lying there dead on the ground, just over some hood shhh. I know we could have thought of some other way of dealing with the situation, but that's how it is when you are kids. You want to take it upon yourself to deal with the situation and things go the wrong way every time.

I think now it's time for me to change my life around because I don't want to be the next one on the ground. Now that my friend is gone I be hanging around positive people, doing positive things with my life so I can see the future. RIP Armon G.

-Lil' Marie, Alameda

From The Beat: The first half of this piece was as dark as dark gets, and at the end, a bit of light came through like the sun after a storm. It's good to hear that you have started to take these positive steps. Better than good. What other steps are you taking, or planning to take?

Guardian Angel

Pop!

Shot in the head

Moms is cryin'

They son is dead

Kneelin' by the bed

Lil' sis' eyes is red

Look to the north

South, east an' west

Which way should she look?

Which way's the best?

Lookin' to the sky

Tryin' to find the guy

Who supposed to abide

By the laws of right

Who resides in the heavens

An' rides by the side

Of his holy children

So she prays to the Lord

An' looks for guidance

Her dad busts in

Like a damn tyrant

He throws punches to her face

An' leaves

She asked God

Why you doin' this to me?

Askin' why she believes

She take a nine

An' puts a bullet in

Wonderin' why big bro's

In a wooden bin

Feels a hand on her shoulder

Turns around

To just feel colder

'Cause she all alone

Then a warm light flashes

An' she sees her brother

Tellin' her

That even though he's dead

He still loves her

An' no matter what

He's still her brother

Watchin' over

He's her four-leaf clover

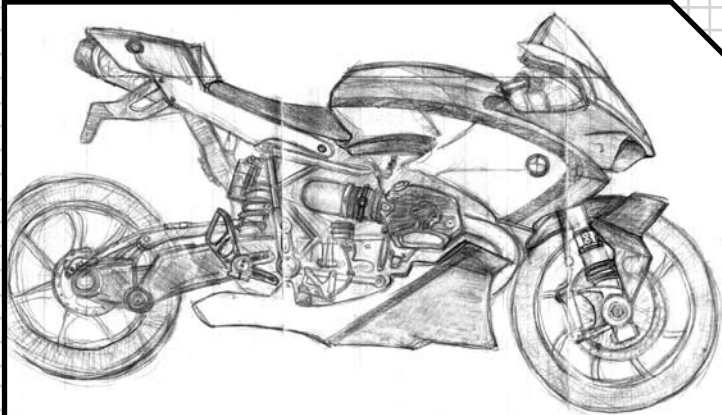
He's got her from every angle

'Cause that's his job

Bein' a guardian angel

-Lil' Hedge Hog, San Francisco

From The Beat: You sure write from your heart in this poem. What inspired it? Does this family in any way resemble yours? You couldn't be the girl's guardian angel, because you're very alive. Anyway, it's heartbreaking to read and beautifully written.



Being A Soldier

The street made me hard,
 my heart makes me real.
 When I don't like the hand I been dealt, I reshuffle the cards.
 I spent years teaching myself not to feel.
 It's not just my physique that makes me strong, it's my dedication to the game.
 The life I lead is far from easy and that's why I get respect.
 I do and say what no one else will.
 That's why long after I am gone, the streets will still echo my name, Smiley.
 Being a true soldier is something nothing and no one will ever take from me.

-Smiley, Alameda

From The Beat: We beg to differ. The system can take down a soldier. A bullet can take down a soldier. And the streets have a short memory. What or who exactly are you loyal to? An idea? A crew? Money? What do we gain when we forget how to feel? Soldiers from the war in Iraq are coming back in physical pain and mental anguish. Some of them are left to live on the sidelines of life. This is also true for some OG's in prison. We hope that you will read the wisdom on the pages of The Beat Without and think some more. If your ancestors could see you living your life today, would they be proud?



Too Ghetto

I remember growing up as an adolescent
 Living day by day
 Still feeling pain and neglected
 What can I say about this messed up life
 When I was little
 Couldn't hang out with other kids
 'Cause I was too ghetto
 I broke down with no spark of hope
 Chopping dope, smoke it up and rewind
 Countless times I could of lost my life
 With my hand gripping tight on that 9
 Revenge in my eyes
 What you see is everything you despise
 Life's a b-- then you die
 So live it right, take a forty to the face
 Past the blunt to the left
 Take a toke
 And watch your stress go.

-Ace, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Despise? No, no one should despise someone capable of writing with such honesty and truth. You hit exactly on why that blunt, that 40, are so tempting, because they make the stress go away - temporarily. But then they often make you do things that add to the stress, which is where the paradox comes in. You deserve better, don't you think?

Inside My Mind (In Four Chapters)

1. My Grandparents

My special elder is my grandma. My grandpa is like my mom because my mom isn't really around. My grandma has always loved me as much as possible. She always tries to get me everything I want, even when she and I both know I don't deserve it.

My grandma always tries as hard as she can to teach me wrong from right, but some times I give her attitude. She puts up with it because she loves me and she wants me to be a good person when I grow up.

My grandpa is exactly the same way. That's why I love the both of them so much and that's why I love living with them.

2. I Don't Let It Show

When some thing disappoint me or I feel that I disappointed someone I feel heart broken, I feel like I'm nothing but trash, like I'm no good.

But I don't really let it show I just get angry and get into fights all the time. But all my feeling I mostly keep it to myself.

-Johnny, Alameda

From The Beat: You used a few short sentences to write a really moving piece. All those feelings bottled up inside must be torture. You deserve to feel better - about yourself and about your life. What about looking at your mistakes as just that - mistakes to be regretted but also built on, learned from, so you can do better next time?

What's up Beat?

What's crackin'? Me, just chillin'. But anyway, I'm mad is hell right now because my brother Chinky had a interview to get out and do a program, but they denied his program. Now he's in the Ranch doing 12 months.

Every night I think what I'ma do wit' my life. I've been in and out of jail. I had a nice job at The Beat. Man, all I can say is damn, look what I've done to my family. Man, shhh!

My family got problems, but all I'm doing is adding to the problem by coming in here. I also think about my grandmother because she came and seen me one time and the first thing I ask her is how did she get here. She said she got a ride from her friend and I said thank god because she ain't got no car and she always catch the bus.

But anyway Beat, I got to bounce. See ya next week.

-Chunky, San Francisco

From The Beat: We're sorry about your brother going to the Ranch, but that's also a program, and maybe he'll come out stronger at the other end. It sounds like you are giving your life and the choices you've made some serious thought. Have you come up with any solutions or plans for change? You had good things going for you and your not only lost them, you can see that you're putting people you love through it right along with you. We know you have the power to make the changes you need to make, but only you know if you will exercise that power. We hope so.

I've been in and out of jail. I had a nice job at The Beat. Man, all I can say is damn, look what I've done to my family.

That Memory

What's a memory that still haunt's me?
You were supposed to be there when I need you,
but you weren't there. I really loved you,
but you didn't care.

I took care of your worries,
I told you stories but you didn't care.
When I said I loved you I really meant it,
but you look at me with that stupid stare.
I loved you a lot, but your love was just a plot
to throw me in a pot of hell's flare.

Disappointment is what I feel like ,
sitting at a kitchen table with out a meal.

My soul is empty since the day you left;
I'm haunted 'till the day that I rest.

- Masino, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's not clear to us at The Beat who this person is that haunts you. Maybe you should take a step back putting yourself in that persons shoes to see what they see. Maybe then you could re-gain your soul, and live on with out being haunted.

A Father's Son

The memory that still haunts me was the day I left my son. I went away when his life had barely begun. He is my blessing from God that I really messed up. I was too into the streets and worried about money to re-up. It hurt me so much when I left my son, because it made me realize even thought I was hurtin', now, his hurtin' has just begun.

I remember when I watched him be born, I promised, I would never leave him but now that promise is torn. I'm a better man and will be a better father even though I'm not there.

The years you are a toddler, forgive me today, and I'll love you forever even though things are bad right now we can pull it back together.

- Reggie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: Now that your son is here, live for the both of you. Change your ways if not for you, change your ways for your son, so he can have a life away from crime and violence. It's not just about you any more.

My Mom Is My Special Person

Wassup, Beat Within? This is Young Racs. I'm just writing to you guys that my mom is a special person because she is always there for me, even if it's in the bad times or in the good times. She really supports me. She talks to me. She really cares about me. I really look up to her. She always tells me that she always want me to go to college for I can be somebody in live. She doesn't want me to be a loser.

I really regret being up in here locked up. I always think about that I should have listened to my mom. If I listened to her, I wouldn't e in here. I will be in the out. But for some reason, I ended up in here. That's what God wanted. For some reason, He brought me in here. But I don't regret it. I just have to start a new life, a new chance. If I never came in here, I will probably end up dead. That some real stuff in life.

Peace out, Beat Within. Late!

-Young Racs, San Francisco

From The Beat: You already know how lucky your are to have a mother who is so much in your corner, and who stands by you even when you let her (and yourself) down. The fact that you honor God for bringing you here (and protecting you from what's out there) is another sign that you are maturing into a responsible young man from an irresponsible young boy. The greatest gift you could give your mother is to follow through on the promise you make here to start a new life, to finish school and get that college education. Your mother deserves that. And so do you.

A Man

Every day I watched my mom hurt
I try To fight for her but when the cops came she turns
and fights me

I'm only try'in to protect her from

A man

But by me doing what's right I get punished

By a man

I cry and go on about my business but my mom can't
seem to escape;

A man

I grow up, she kicks me out now I can't talk to her like I
used to

Finally she just gives up and turns her back on me
I love her but she can't show me her love because of

A man

Now I'm a young man with a child she hasn't seen
I get in trouble, can't think, don't know how to do right
People say I'm bad, crazy, but don't know it's because of

A man

I will always love her, because even though she's getting
the hurtin', I feel her beatin' by a man

Mom I love you from your child, now a young man

- Reggie, Land Of Enchantment

From The Beat: It's not easy to watch the ones you love get hurt. It's even worse to lose that loved one. Now that you're "a young man" make amends with your mother, so you can have that relationship you once had.

Really Thinking

The things that's on my mind is getting out and doing
the right thing, being a young responsible adult that my
mother has brought me up to be and that I'm determined
to be.

I've been thinking about a lot of things ever since I've
been detained, things that I never thought of before, like
maybe the situation I'm in is showing me that I need to
change my life around and go about things the right way
and do what I have to do to get me through life.

I see thing as life is what you make it. You only get
one chance at life, and make the best out of it. live life to
da fullest...

-China, San Francisco

From The Beat: It sounds like this experience has truly opened your eyes, and if that's true, then maybe it's worth it. You're right, you only get one life to live, and there's no way to live life to the fullest as long as you put yourself under the control of strangers in a place like this. So, when you get out of here, don't forget the promises you've made to yourself.

A Memory That Haunts Me

A memory that still haunts me to this day is a nightmare
I had a while ago... I was chillin' in my house playing
video game. Then, out of nowhere, my grandma comes in
my room with a Rambo knife in her hand wearing a flower
dress.

Well, she comes in my room screamin', doin' all kinds
of crazy shhh. Then she started chasing me! I got up
from my couch and started runnin' all down the hallway.
Then I got whacked by her...

I don't know, man. That was a weird dream. I woke
up after like at 1:00 a.m. and found out I was passed out
outside my house...

-Lil' Speedy, San Francisco

From The Beat: What a frightening dream. It would be scary just to be chased by anyone, but to have it be your grandma. Damn! What do you think you were trying to tell yourself (since all dreams come out of our own brains). Did you ever tell your grandma about this dream?

Disappointment

What's up with The Beat man. It's ya boy that stay shining man. Novo F. I deal with disappointment by reading books and listening to music. I just put me in a different mode. It's like I be in a zone and block everything out.

Reading and listening to music makes me forget all about my problems, worries, defects, an' disappointments. I get angry but it helps me better myself by thinking more. The biggest disappointment I had so far is me not being there to see my uncle and tell him I love him before he passed.

-Nova F, San Francisco

From The Beat: We think you've found some great strategies for dealing with disappointment. What kind of books do you like? What's your favorite music? Even though you were not there to tell your uncle that you loved him, we're sure that he knew it.

Mama Fagatasi

One of the greatest I know,
 Helped raised me most of my life,
 I really miss her because
 She passed away almost two years ago,
 Rest In Peace,
 I have always considered her a mother,
 'Cause in a way she was,
 She always will tell me to do good,
 And cried when I was bad,
 But she was always there,
 I've always treated her with the utmost respect,
 Because that's how she treated me,
 And everyone else in the fam,
 One of the things I loved the most about her
 Was when fam came around her,
 We came together,
 Even if we had problems or hated one another,
 It felt so peaceful and uplifting,
 Every thing is and was different, around her,
 I loved that about her,
 What also created a bond between us,
 Was that I couldn't speak Samoan much,
 And she could rarely speak English,
 But we worked around that,
 And created a mother-son relationship,
 We could sit for thirty minutes,
 And just smile feeling peaceful,
 She always asked about me,
 And I always checked on her,
 I always hated being away too,
 I remember being locked up,
 And my grandma came to see me
 On a wheel chair wit' my fam on my birthday,
 And she cried and I cried,
 She came even though she had a stroke previously,
 Nobody could get her to eat,
 I tried to feed her raspberries,
 And she came ate them,
 I cried because I know it was because
 My grandma loves me,
 It felt special,
 I miss my grandma.
 RIP Fagatasi, my Elder.

-Halo, San Francisco

From The Beat: What a truly sweet tribute to a beloved elder, your grandmother Fagatasi. It is nice to know that you realize how lucky you were to have such a special person in your life. We are sure she also knew how much you loved her (and that is why she let you feed her those raspberries, and why she ate them). You've turned a corner in your life, Halo, and she's looking down and smiling on you. Keep her smiling!

Short Story, Part I

It was 1989, the whole year it was snowing hard. Everyone stayed in there houses most of the time. The city was Malberry, a small little peaceful city, where everybody knew each other. The time was Oct. 29 and all the kids were rived up.

Hey Angel what's up, you want to come with me and my brother Jesse up to devil's Hill to through snow balls at that old creepy haunted house?

Hell no, I heard the Lucifers couldn't have no kids so on every Halloween they would keep the treaters and kill them and pull out their insides and stuff them. They would use them as puppets for their family they didn't have!"

Jessie and Ben started using peer pressure on Angel.

You're the scardiest 15 year old I've ever seen. I'm telling everyone at school that you're a scardy cat. Oh well, ghosts aren't real and people don't stuff kids.

Damn Ben, are we almost there yet?
 Yeah, its right there by the ocean on top of the hill.

Damn it's about time.

The house doesn't even look scary. But in my head I was shaking in my sneakers. Ben told me, "Let's see who could through the biggest snow ball."

I picked up a lot of snow and threw it.

Damn Angel, you broke the window. Shhh, I'm in trouble.

No you won't be, me and my brother have a plan.

Let me hear it.

Well, we could go in there and get a board and nail it up.

I'm not going in there, Angel said.

Why? You said you don't believe in ghosts.

I don't, well I guess I'll go.

Ben and Jessie were talking when Angel was climbing into the window.

Damn bro, we're going to scare him and lock him in the house so he could believe in ghosts.

You're messed up bro.

Don't go soft on me.

All right, I'm in.

We're just going to scare him, right? Yeah. Well, we all started going through the window. Jessie screamed in agonizing pain.

I cut myself, I'm bleeding.

Don't start crying bro, here wrap this around your leg and be a man.

Damn Ben we should just leave because this place is bad luck.

No, we're not. There's boards in the attic.

We started walking up the stairs, in a blink of an eye the stair broke and Ben fell through.

We just heard Ben's screams, the ground broke his fall.

Ben don't worry we're coming for you, stay still...

-Bird, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Short stories are not easy to write. Good short stories share the personalities of the characters, and make readers want to read further. We like your story so far and hope you hone your short story-telling skills. We look forward to the second part of this thriller of a story!

Reading and listening to music makes me forget all about my problems, worries, defects, an' disappointments.

Disappointment

When I'm disappointed, sometimes I get angry. Sometimes I keep to myself. If I get angry I might get into a fight or take off on a wall. Sometimes I just give up because I always try my hardest, and if I fail I feel like a failure.

I been disappointed in some friends and family, but I bet I disappoint more people. I messed up, but once I get out, I'ma do right. This week I disappointed myself. I shoulda never got locked up for this stupid shhh. But hey, nobody's perfect. People make mistakes. I just hope I get out soon so they give me the opportunity that I'll do right.

-MC, San Francisco

From The Beat: We also hope you get the opportunity to do right. You sound genuinely disappointed in yourself for doing the "stupid shhh" that gave the system the power to put you in this box. That's something you have control over, so don't disappoint yourself again!

RIP Doobie

One memory that still haunts me is from when I was in Oakland on the street. Everyone was hanging out and it was me my cousin and our other patnas. When we were drunk we were all having a very good time, and when we were inside someone's house, we were wrestling with Doobie and we all got tackled. Doobie had thrown a football out his front window and broke it accidentally and we all went outside.

We was waitin' on the time because we were about to go to a party.

When we went to that party they started shooting, and I almost got shot in my chest. So we started runnin' out the party and then the party was over. I got home safe, and so did everyone else.

But early in the morning the next day I found out that Doobie got shot. I was so hurt, crying and everything.

I didn't want anyone saying anything to me. And that's the memory that haunts me and will forever haunt me.

-Missing Doobie, Alameda

From The Beat: This piece is so well-written, you really made us feel what you went through. One minute it's all good, joking around throwing a football, and the next minute, you've lost someone you care about. Sometimes a tragedy like that, especially one so violent, can make a person's whole life go downhill. After Doobie died, and you almost did, how did you handle it? Whom did you turn to? What kind of an impact did that have on your life?

Rest in Peace: Dre

A memory that still haunts me is the day I was at my godmother's house and I woke up and they said my brother died.

I went to Highland Hospital and saw my brother on the bed with his eyes shut closed. I just started praying for him, wanting him to wake up.

That Sunday he died on June 25, 2005 and funeral was Thursday. His face look old and molded but he still had his dreads with a tuxedo on.

His face and body looked like he was in agony, but he seemed like he was in peace. I was only 13, and that funeral day still haunts me and seeing my only big brother dead. Rest in Peace Dre

-Kevin, Alameda

From The Beat: You painted such a vivid picture of what that day must have been like that we feel like we were watching with you. It's good to know that he still had his dreads, so you could say farewell to that familiar brother you loved. What was it like afterwards, for you? Do you remember the weeks that followed? The whole family must have been in terrible pain. How did you "act it out"?

Disappointment

When I get disappointed, I usually act out on my emotions. I know that it usually doesn't work out in my favor when I do, but I usually can't stop myself. When I am disappointed, I do get angry. My disappointment usually doesn't make me try harder, but it make me give up. That is why I am in this situation now.

The way I resolve my feelings is mostly by cursing at people or fighting. When I'm on the streets, I mostly deal with my disappointment by smoking weed. The last person that disappointed me was my probation officer. I turned myself in with the thought that I was going to be on the streets in about two weeks because I only had a violation. But a few days after being in custody, I found out she was sending me to a out of home placement. Now I'm just waiting to see what happens.

-Keenan, San Francisco

From The Beat: We appreciate the honesty in this piece. But if you see that your disappointment and anger make your situation worse, then why not try to work on some self-control. You say you "can't stop" yourself, but we don't really believe that. We're sure you've stopped yourself many times. (When you get angry at staff, we know you think twice before flashing because you don't want the consequences. That's an example that proves you can stop yourself if you try.) If your PO put you back on the streets, would anything be different about the way you live or react?

A Memory That Still Haunts Me

On March 3rd 2002 was the most messed up day of my life. The reason why it was the most messed up day for me was because that was the day dat my momma died in front of my face.

It all happened when we was sitting in the living room after having a family meeting in the kitchen. Well, me my mom and my aunty was watching TV, and then my mom looked at me weird and said that she loved me and always will. And then I said it back, but thinking nothing of it. Then she looked again, then gave this sigh of relief. Then she took her last breath and was gone right there in front of me.

That is a bad memory that will always be there to haunt me. You ask where all this took place... at my aunty house in the jets.

-Cindy, San Francisco

From The Beat: Of course you are haunted by this memory! We're so, so sorry. What did your mom die of? One thing about this haunting memory that should make it easier, is that her last words were how she loved you, and the last words she heard were your words telling her the same.

My Grandfather, My Best Friend

The most important elder in my life is my grandfather. He is my best friend. I can talk to him about anything! When I'm having trouble with school or peer pressure, he's right there telling me life stories.

Of course, I may get bored listening sometimes, but when he's done talking, I realize that I learned a lot. I also talk to him about boy problems.

He has 95 years of experience in the game, so he knows all the tricks that boys play. Also, he is a pastor. I always talk to him when I need guidance about God. My granddad doesn't judge me, but he helps me figure out when I'm right or wrong. I love my grandpa! And I know he loves me!

-Mimi, Alameda

From The Beat: Having such an awesome grandpa, we wonder what stories, when you are 95, you'll be able to tell your grandchildren? It seems that grandparents play such an important role in many young people's lives.

Disappointment

Q- vole Beat? This be the homie Termite coming from that max unit 7. Well, today I'ma write about a time I felt disappointed.

A couple of months ago there was a homie in here running his mouth about he was gonna get off on a rival. We were on split program so we never came out when our enemies were outside the room because the staff thought it was gonna be a big-ass riot.

So the homie got transferred to another unit where there was no split program and came out with the rivals and didn't get off on them. So I'm thinking the homie gonna get off tomorrow, but the next day nothing happened. So one day I see him while I'm at gym and he walking in front of the rivals. That disappointed me a lot because it made our side look bad. It also got me sad because he made it look like he only talk shhh behind the door and not when he with them.

I think that's one of the worst times I was disappointed because home boy was running his mouth like he the big bad gangsta, but at the end he couldn't hang with the mess he was running.

-Termite, San Francisco

From The Beat: We understand why you're disappointed with your homie's hypocrisy — saying one thing but doing another. But what are you more disappointed with, the fact that he talked all that shhh, or the fact that he didn't go off on your rivals? To be honest, we think he talked irresponsibly but acted responsibly (although we don't expect you to agree with our view of things). We think you should cut him a break because there is a lot of peer pressure inside these units to make people talk tough and not to appear "weak" — and peer pressure is something that all of us (including you) have fallen victim to, from time to time. You say that he made "your" side look bad because he didn't go off on your rivals, but because he didn't, we think he made your side look better. We guess it all depends on where you stand... or where you sit.

Disappointment

How I deal with disappointment? I think about the situation and I would not get angry. It would bother me for two seconds. but I let it go. I don't want to waste two or three minutes being angry when I could use those two or three minutes being happy.

I really don't let things get to me. There might be reasons of the situation, and what happens. I move on in my life because if anything happens and my life comes to an end, I don't want to die all bitter and mad. I'll rather be happy.

-Lucero, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you can really carry out the attitude you express here, you're very lucky. But are you always happy? What makes your moods change, one way or the other?

Seasons

I remember in the summer how you used to take me across seas. I had no school so when you went on vacation you would always take me with you.

In the winter, before I went outside you would dress me in warm clothes so I wouldn't catch a cold. When I come inside you would always have something hot for me to drink.

I remember in the fall how you had everything I needed for school before I even knew about it.

Spring was the best of all how we would pick flowers with my sisters and pick berries to bake pies.

I will always treasure that year mom.

-Young Child, Seneca

From The Beat: This is a very sweet piece and your mom must be sweetheart. These memories should keep you warm inside. Continue to treasure the good times because sometimes when we go through hard times we forget the good memories.

A Harsh Memory

I am supposed to write about a memory that still haunts me. Well one memory that I can think of is the first time that I started to do drugs. It might sound like a regular cool thing that everyone is doing but for me it was different.

I was not the type of person that could do drugs on the weekends, smoke and drink a little, and then go back to school on Monday and pass the test.

After I tried drugs for the first time, everything started to go down hill. I started to skip class, my grades started to drop, and I was always getting into trouble.

Now I'm in a grouper and I have been here for about five months. I am almost about to be living at home soon. But I still look back to when I tried drugs the first time, and what happened.

Now that I am going to be living at home. I worry about what if I pick up a blunt again, and all my hard work could go down the drain? I might end up doing something stupid, and then I will be wearing a light green shirt, with slippers, waiting for my next court date. I really do not want to go down that road again. That is why that is the memory that haunts me the most.

-Lionfishy, Seneca

From The Beat: Sometimes it's good to remember bad memory's such as this one. So you can remind yourself that you never want to go back there. If you do feel like your going to go back to drugs you should go ask for help first before you make that same mistake. It's always a good thing to talk to someone about how your feeling, especially wsomeon who cares about you!

Who I Am

My life has changed since the day I got locked up and it has changed for all of the others that are here, too.

My life before coming here was all about partying and not caring about anybody like my mom or brothers. I just liked to party. I didn't care about going to school or getting home early. It was just me, me, and me.

Now that I'm locked up, I realize that I was so stupid because when I was out there I should have stayed home with my mama and brothers and spent time with them. I should have told them how much I love them and how much I appreciate my mom for taking care of me. I should have gone to school and finished and found friends that don't get in trouble like the friends I used to have.

Now, I'm here in this building locked up without my mom, brothers, and family. Now, I can't tell them how much I miss them and love them. I think about them everyday.

Now, I'm a woman that understands more and understands that I'm not the only one that misses being home with my family, boyfriends or girlfriends, kids, brothers, sisters, and especially our parents because they are the ones that brought us to this world and understand that in this world - nothing is free. Like my mom says, "Nos tiene que pasar algo para nagarrar la onda." Now, I got it - ever since I got here. I don't recommend this place to anyone and when I get out...I'm not coming back. Thank You.

- Cynthia, Durango, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: It sounds like being locked up has helped you rethink your priorities and what is really important in your life. We hope that you will carry this lesson with you when you return to the "outs". No party is worth hurting those who love you most. Your friends may be there for you while you're at the party, but your family will be there no matter what. As a teenager it's easy to get caught up in having a great social life, but that is something that quickly fades. Invest your time in things that will have long lasting results-like your education, improving skills and talents you may have, and of course time with family. It's ok to have fun sometimes, too, just make sure you aren't compromising what's most important in life to do it.

My Hard Life

I grew up in New Orleans I moved from there when I was 9 years old.

I then moved to S.F, I been out here for 7 years. I started school out here but then my uncle J-Rich got killed that's when I was 11 years old. So I told myself when I became a teenager I was not going to listen to nobody.

So I turned thirteen than that's when I started not to go to school, then I started to hang out with my big cousin. So that's when my big cousin, Gangster, got killed, I felt so bad I cried and cried 'till I went to sleep.

So I was not going home or going to school I was just on the block from night to day. I started going to jail making my grandma stress because my brother and sister was already in the system.

Then my other big cousins Lilo in Rio got killed I just lost it. I was talking to them three days before Thanksgiving, so the day on Thanksgiving my grandma called me, she said, "baby I got something to tell you."

I had a bad feeling, so she told me that my two big cousins got shot down. They was not coming back. I stopped, and started to cry. I thought it was the end of the world so I got kicked out of my group home. So then they put me in a group home in the city.

Ten months pass and now I am back home with my family, so for everybody out there that's locked down please do good an make yourself an your family proud.

One love and God bless.

-Connie The Flat Head, Seneca

From The Beat: It's very sad that you had to lose so many family members. We are very happy to hear that you're back home. Continue to keep moving forward and take your own advice it's a very wise choice.

My Special Elder

I admire my grandma and grandpa. They have taken care of me for more than half my life. My mom always used to work, so I was always with my grandparents. My grandma used to pick me up after school, then cook for me and take care of me till my mom got home.

On the weekends, they take time and take me to the park to spend time to play. My grandparents are 80-90 right now. I feel really bad they don't know where I am. I don't tell them because we have to save face 'cause of our Chinese culture. I am very mad at myself for doing this and leaving my grandma and grandpa.

-Chinese Boi, San Francisco

From The Beat: We admire how honest you are, but we agree with you that you've really let your grandparents down! We understand why you want to save face, but we wish you would work just as hard to save the rest of your body so that you wouldn't have any need to save face! Feel us?

RIP Baby Girl

The memory that still haunts me is when I was nine months pregnant. I was on my way to the store and when I got out of the car I was beat out of the car.

I was beat up by four dudes that my baby daddy had funk with and I ended up going to the hospital where my daughter Anena Stephany Rodriguez was born. She died two hours later.

RIP Baby Girl

-Precious, Alameda

From The Beat: Reading this piece only makes us admire the positive mindset you bring to each workshop even more. You have survived a tragic and heart-splitting event that could break a weaker spirit. But you seem to be even stronger. Tell us more about how you coped with this loss, and how you are healing.

This Shhh Is Crazy

This shhh is crazy I put myself in this position
Now I'm locked up cause a ninja wouldn't listen

I shoulda known I ninja was gon go to jail
Instead I went to the bank and now I'm livin in this hell

A type of hell that a ninja call jail a

And a ninja so young he can't even post bail

What the f*&^ is these ninjas fa' real?

They tryna give me 7 years but only I was just there!

The D.A., man that b-- don't even care!

She tryna wash a ninja up make a ninja shed a tear

I stay strong, leavin' the court wit' no fear

Now my baby gurl cryin' cause she think I'm getting years

My deal it was only two years,

"Yes sir" to the judge "Yeah I learned my lesson here"

Tell God please forgive me for my sins

Now I'm back on the outs still sippin' on some gin

No 'potes 'cause a ninja need his wind

Now I'm running from the cops hidin' think what I did

Please Lord let this be some type of dream

But it's not. I'm in this cell write what I did to me

Now I need to change this life around

But I can't cause a ninja keep it mobbin' all around

My girl sayin' that's the best for me

Or be dead or locked up,

Messin' wit these Oakland Streets?

-Weezy, Alameda

From The Beat: This flow has it all: Heart, regret, original rhymes, truth, love, rage, and dreams. But we have to side with your lady on this. You are too good to end up a casualty of the Oakland streets, and this poem proves it. Fast forward ten years, tell us what you see. And tell us what you WANT. That's a rhyme worthy of your gifts.

*I am very mad at myself
for doing this and leaving
my grandma and grandpa.*

Ladies Listen Up

Scandilous females, trickin' dumb ho

Standing on that corner tryin' to make that dough.

Thinkin' they pimps got they back,

But when you locked up, where they? On the track
posted in the Cadillac.

Life goes on with or without you.

Don't get it twisted. I used to do what you do.

But I got out that game and still sittin' in jail for makin'
that mistake.

So take it from someone who had to learn the hard way.

Save yourself from that money

because you can get it other ways than sellin' yo
goodies!

-Babyboo, Durango, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: We think you have a point with this piece, but we want to challenge the descriptions you make of the women caught up in this line of "work". It all seems twisted to us...that women who are the queens of this earth can be turned into merchandise to be sold. We recognize that this form of street life is harsh and that the game is all about survival, but we also wonder who these women are inside and whether they deserve the labels they are so often given. You, and other young women we've met through the years, are the reason we wonder, because as we read what you write and you reveal your heart... we see great value. We are thankful you have come to recognize your worth.

A Ugly Memory

A memory that still haunts me and that will probably haunt me for the rest of my life would have to be around two and a half years ago, when I was living with my son's father, who was very abusive.

I was seven months into my pregnancy and me and my son's dad had gotten into an argument over something really stupid, so he pushed me onto the ground then sat on my stomach, and pinned my hands down. I felt sharp pains in my lower abdomen and started crying and begging for him to get off my stomach because I don't want to go into labor early. Then he finally did and I rushed over to the hospital to get checked out and thank God everything was okay. But it still haunts me of what the other outcome could have been. And that was enough to scare me out of that relationship for a while.

-Lil' Sapita, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Thank you for sharing this painful memory. It is so amazing how much we can hurt those we love the most. There is something about love that makes us vulnerable. You said that your boyfriend got counseling and anger management after this and we hope that your relationship has gotten healthier.

World Drought

Open your eyes, smell the coffee,
look at the rain pouring softly.

In this world that's all we need.

Looking at this drought is sad indeed.

Driving past Lake Mead can you notice the peaks
all white from where the water used to be?

As I pass, I look and stare

holding my water; drink it I don't dare.

I pull the car over, I take my cap off and empty it all in
feeling a lot better before then.

As I get home I take off all my clothes and take a 5 min
shower

instead of my usual half hour.

Maybe if we cut back all the things we usually did,
we can beat this drought and longer shall we live.

-Babyboo, Durango, Maricopa County, Arizona

From The Beat: There are many issues that your generation will face in the coming years and the state of the earth and it's future will most likely be one of the most important one. How will you spread this message of making a difference to others outside of detention? Babyboo, you obviously pay attention to the details in the world around you. The details of your thought progression and rhymes are not lost on us and we look forward to reading more.

Done Seen My Best Homie Die

Livin' in the streets it was hard for me
Started kickin' it with the gang members

Started smoking weed and drinking Hennessey

Put on a rag and it suited me

My mom didn't know what I was doin' late at night with
my homies

Snatchin' car stereos and hittin' G rides

Doin' drive-bys earn my stripes getting my dots

It didn't matter to me 'cause all I felt was anger

People tell me I need to grow a heart but my heart done
froze

'Cause I done seen my best homie die damn right

I cried and all I could think of was Eazy-E's song

Another mother cries, another son lie in a casket.

-Lil' Wicho, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Beautiful, heartbreaking writing - the kind of writing that comes from a heart which beats too strong to let the ice take over. You've been a part of so much tragedy already. What next? Is this the life you think you will return to? Or do you have other plans, other hopes, other dreams?

Thoughts Of Freedom

What up Beat And Beat leaders! How is it hanging?!
Hope all is well.

Today I was thinking of what freedom means to me. The way I see it. Freedom is a gift that can be taken away if you mess up in life. For instance, people in prison that are doing life once had the gift of freedom and now they don't have it because they probably thought that they had to prove something to their so-called "friends." I don't want to be that way because I want to grow up and have children, so I can raise them the right way and give them what I never had. I feel sorry for those that are in the prisons all over the world because they're never gonna see freedom again.

For those who are reading this remember, there is two paths that you can go down and one is the path of freedom and happiness and the other is prison for life and unhappiness till death. Don't be followers, be leaders. You can take this advice and follow it if you want or you can take the path of unhappiness 'till you die, you choose.

-Sad Boy, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Sad Boy, it's so great to hear you dropping such positive knowledge. But how do people go about choosing the path of freedom? Are you going to be able to do it? By the way, We sure do miss you on the unit!

I Broke Down Crying

A disturbing memory I got is where my brah-brahs got killed. I was in a group home when it happened. I called the brah-brahs, and they was like, "Chedda got hit!" I said, "Is he going to make it?" and they was like, "Yeah." And soon as I said that, his cousin was on the phone with his mom, and she said he gone! He made it for like five hours and he died.

I ain't even gone lie. I broke down crying for hella long. I couldn't eat for like hella days. When that happen, I lost my mind, I ain't going to lie. Me and dude was supposed to grow old together and, you know, rock on those orange county cats in those basketball games, because dude was raw in hoops.

Ey, look, this shhh will not stop, daddy. I'm in it for the chedda and the sky.

-Money Earnin Vernon, San Francisco

From The Beat: Of course you cried when your friend Chedda got killed. Every death leaves those who loved that person in such pain, whether it's one of "yours," one of "theirs," or total strangers. Is it right to put others through the pain you felt? We're sure Chedda, like you, was also "in it for the chedda and the sky," but that didn't protect him from losing everything. Is it worth giving it all up for the money, and putting your own loved ones in the same terrible pain you suffered through?

Boredom

Why am I always so damn bored? I feel
Like I'm sleeping. I have dreams about being
Locked up and going through the daily routine,
And when I wake, my day is a reflection of
My night. And the only thing that breaks
Through the barrier is echos from a time
I felt alive a time before incarceration, echoes
Of Beethoven's 5th.

-Monk, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is probably why reading becomes so important to people in jail, it's the way to add variety to the day. In a book you can go back to Beethoven's time, forward to a future where people take spaceships to other planets like we take busses to the other side of town. You can see tragedy and comedy, all of it. They can lock up your body, but as you show with this piece, which starts on tedium and ends in a burst of thunder from one of the world's greatest geniuses - your imagination belongs to you. Put it to work and tell us a story that will take our readers out of their daily routine for a minute!

The World Is A Prison

Hip, yes you are on top of game, so game recognize game. If your ass likes being locked up, and people telling you what to do, stay on the streets. Why, because the world is a big ass prison. Republicans run these four walls. George W. Bush, a Republican, he runs the country. Making sure you are in the ghetto, jail, or war. You can't beat them, and the rage and anger fills us with hatred.

But you don't have to join them just because you made it out the 'hood. Trying to be white, with your white money, going to get yourself some white friends, plus a white man or woman. That causes black and Hispanic communities to fall. Remember that money is white, not the people. Don't be racist.

But when the system is made, designed to set you up. Locked up or on the outs, two ways to attack us. One if you are on the outs, living in a low grade community, the ghetto so you're set up to rob and kill each other, then sell drugs. This is our survival instincts. Two, then catch the suspect you.

Then you are locked up facing a death sentence. To get rid of you, the electric chair, because they are not allowed to lynch you. If you are going to be successful and not let the system with. Don't be a sell out. We have sellouts, like some politicians that would lie to a whole black society for some of that white money. Money is the root to all evil and the president got it in the crack of his ass.

-Gucci, Alameda

From The Beat: Sounds like you've been reading Malcolm X or the Panthers! It's good to see you thinking about the way politics and history affect the lives we live now - black, white, brown, rich, poor, boy, girl. It seems like it's not just about skin color, but also about who's got money, who wants money, who's got power, and who wants power. So now that you have learned this, what's changed in you, do you look at your past life and actions differently? Bring the knowledge!!!

Love From My Family

This week I'm going to talk about receiving love or giving love from your family I have always received love from my family especially when I come in here they have always come to visit me in these three months that I been here tomorrow or not tomorrow but at least the judge will let me out on someday this month so I hope they let me out so I could give the love that my parents have giving me.

One of the memories that still haunts me is when I come into jail I ain't never gonna forget that memory, never ever in my life. It scares me, because I never liked this place and I ain't never gonna like it so I hope one day I'll forget about it and try to make it better I was disappointed last 19th of September because the judge told me to come back in a month to see if they're going to make me go to a group home or let me go home. So it's been a month and almost five days since I went to court, and hopefully my court is tomorrow and I hope the judge will let me go home.

When I'm disappointed I get angry but I'm in jail and I'm vulnerable if I express my anger out, because it gon' me in trouble or something. So you gotta try to keep cool while you're in jail.

I hope the judge will let me go home tomorrow so I could be with my family and try to make my life better.

-C, Alameda

From The Beat: We put all your pieces together into one, because they added up to a powerful whole story about how you feel and your situation. As hard as it is, you took being locked up and used it to teach yourself how to cool down when you're mad. That will help you in here AND on the outs. Congratulations!

My Grandfather: A Gentle Elder

My grandfather was an elder that always made me want to

Become better. He was some one that every one love and made everything comfortable, he would always try to build thing for his home or repair broken item, or just create random things for fun

to pass time.

My grandfather was someone that I respect, he always cared and loved every one in his family, always trying to help any way he could, even though he was old and getting weak.

Even though that he is gone now, he will always be to me

My grandfather who is known as a saint, and a gentle elder.

-John, Santa Clara

From The Beat: Your grandfather sounds like he was an amazing person, a person we would all be blessed to have in our lives. What is the greatest lesson he taught you? And what personality traits did he have that you would like to strengthen in yourself?

Fed Up

Man, I'm fed up wit' this Juvenile hall shhh, fed up wit' the way we play ourselves and keep letting the system play us, fed up wit' myself coming back an' forth to this place, fed up letting these staff see my face, fed up. Man, I'm fed up!

-Bean Fed Up, San Francisco

From The Beat: It takes some people longer than others to finally get tired of giving away their freedom to places like this instead of taking control of their lives and living them in freedom. We hope you really are fed up, because that means you'll make the changes you need to make in order to be the master of your own fate. Unless you make those changes, you'll only get more fed up.

A Lot of Elders

I have a lot of elders that love me and tell me all the time to do good to be the best I can.

My first is my father, because a lot of kids unfortunately don't have theirs. I thank God I have mine...he's my role model. He wants the best for me. He has a job and puts food on our table. He told me all the time to stay out of trouble, gave me examples of people he knew that now maybe half are messed up in the brain because of drugs, gangs, whatever. He that he talks to me, tells me to be the best and he love me and he is the best dad I will ever have.

My second is my mom, and she is just like my dad. She loves me and wants the best for me.

My third is my grandfather, my mom's dad (Rest in Peace), because before he died he told me to promise him that I will be good and with my parents too. He died of cancer and when I promised him that, it's like I promised him to do bad.

My world turned upside down and I got locked up. But my grandfather taught me to love the people who love me and respect those who I receive respect from.

But I learned this not long ago, every night I pray and ask for his forgiveness and I barely realize this is just because I'm locked up. I love all the people who taught me a lot and told me about things that are in my heart, and I thank God that He gave them to me.

-Martin, Alameda

From The Beat: What a perfect piece to read around Thanksgiving time. You really get at the things that matter most in our short lives: Forgiveness, love, family. We bet your grandfather would be proud of this piece, and he would be extra proud of you if you carried through on its promise in the future!

*All this pressure
 I got on my shoulders
 More and more as I get older
 But every day is a new day
 All you can do is pray*

In My Life

In my life things are not so good
 I'm locked up in jail and in my hood
 People look at me as if I was the same
 They don't believe I have changed
 Every since I was a child
 It's been hard for me to smile
 People expect me to change
 Just like that
 But they don't feel the pain in my back
 All this pressure I got on my shoulders
 More and more as I get older
 But every day is a new day
 All you can do is pray
 Pray that your life gets bright
 Bt I'm in the dark putting up a fight.
 My life is like a puzzle, I have to put it all in one
 But it's hard because I'm not halfway done
 And my life it's not so fun
 Because I'm always on the run...

-Tayana, Alameda

From The Beat: You have this burden, and how could you not. But what lightens that load? Praying, you say? And we bet some of your family as well. And thinking about your future and what you want out of life, does that help too? What about writing? Singing? Dancing? Tell us a little about how where you go for strength.

Out the Gutta

I'm sprinkled with a lot of game
 But it's all out the gutta
 Callin' the other ninja to do crimes and smoke
 Wit' my lil' brotha.
 Callin' on him, checkin' to make sure he safe.
 But dreams get shattered when you found out he in this place.
 Runnin' the streets, never getting' no sleep,
 Soon as we get tired we pop another e.
 On like Donkey Kong
 Smokin' up blunts
 Posted everywhere even on sto' fronts
 Downtown San Jose that use to be the place
 Till one night we all caught a pistol case
 All down for serious cases.
 To be honest I'm sittin' here pissed.
 We all down and the only thing we could do is reminisce.
 No matter what we do, or where we go, even if it is 2034.
 We still gone be fam and keep each other safe. But my bras by mean mug on my face
 Always gon' remind y'all of them till they free.

-Domo, Alameda

From The Beat: You can't keep people safe by adding to their danger. The posting, the enemies, the revenge, the guns, the pills you take instead of getting the sleep your body needs, they all just add to the risk. You might think that it's too late to turn around now, but it isn't. At The Beat, we know too many people who have done it - gotten out while they still had the chance. We'd love to see you do that too. And you can, because you have that Domo brain, well-equipped to learn other kinds of knowledge besides knowledge "out the gutta"!

A Ninja Can't Cry No More: RIP Martha

What's up with it Beat ? This yo' boy Sparks from Oakland. Well I'm gonna talk about the hardest time in my life, when I lost my mom. I was one when this happened, and I was at the scene when my mom was getting stabbed to death. Until this day it hurts me so much that a ninja can't cry no more.

I was raised by some good grandparents but my grandpa was always out doing his thing, and when I was 12 he left from the house. So since then I hit the streets and started to do me and make my money.

I was grindin' and stealin' cars, always at my block with my boys. It used to be poppin' until ninjas went bad, and I went with them suckas. That's when I was like screw this, I wanna be with solid ninjas like me, so I then I met my boy and since then I been ridin' and bangin' with my real fam.

So to all in this shhh be safe and keep yo' heads up.

-Sparks

From The Beat: First off, we're so sorry you lost your mom, and in such a violent way. That's a wound you will carry with you until the day you die. And we're also sorry that your grandpa took off right when you were becoming a teenager and needed a solid hand to guide you the most. It seems like the block was the most welcoming part of your life, even with all the violence and betrayals. But now, you know the streets well enough to know that there is no way to "be safe" out there. Some people in your situation have turned their lives to a 180, and discovered a way of living that made them a lot happier than you have been so far. And safer. Would you consider that?

*I want to prove them wrong
 But that's impossible if
 I'm locked up again*

Hoping and Wishing

Tryin' to change my life
 Going to school and doing the right thing
 Doing chores, following rules
 Going day to day
 Ignoring these immature fools
 Hoping and wishing for
 The day to come
 That me and my family
 Come together as one
 Seeing eye to eye
 And being on the same page
 Those are things that we
 Could never agree on
 I want to prove them wrong
 But that's impossible if
 I'm locked up again
 Singin' the same old song
 I wanna go home
 I'm sick of being there
 I wanna run away and make it all disappear
 I cant change the past
 But I can rethink my future
 When I get out this time
 I will change my life.

-Sweetie

From The Beat: This could be Part One of an amazing poem/story. In Part One, you tell us how bad you want it to be better, and how hard you are working in the hall to improve your life. In Part Two, you could tell us exactly how you plan to change your life. What exactly do you want to do?

The Hungry Wolf

It's just people thinkin' the wrong idea
Just 'em thinkin' it's a cure
When it's gonorrhea
It's the hungry wolf
Dressed as a sexy señorita
Drawin' you closer
'Til it's too late
To turn around
No one escapes 'cept a few ninjas
Wit' a crown
But they'll leave a mark
To get you later
An' when you slip again
They hit you wit' the cater
'Cause they leave a post-it on your record
Labelin' you as an untamed leopard
Waitin' to stick a trunk
In your neck
An' throw you in a cage
Wit' no space
An' stale air
You gon' forget your name
The fire in your eyes
Gon' diminish
They won't release you
'Til they know you' finished
They take every chance
To take you down
They don't give a damn
If you cuss an' frown
They just pass go
An' collect the money
Got so much paper
They can use the bills
For when they nose is runny
Find some excuse
To give us time
They say they just tryin' to
Keep us in line
But waitin' for you to mess up
Next court date
Then say we gon' ship you ass off
To another state
Once you give 'em a taste of your blood
The vampire shows it self
Just like Blade
Take a stake
An' watch 'em melt
But you're already known in the computer
They'll be spyin' an' keepin' tabs
Like an undercover tutor
Feedin' your minds
Wit' fake ass lines
It's nothin' but road ties
So break the knot
An' see inside
It's anything but good
Blame what they can on your 'hood
Say you are who did it
You hit 'em
They can do that
'Cause they the power
They the system

-Lil' Hedge Hog, San Francisco

From The Beat: You may be right, that the juvenile justice system is like a vampire, waiting to sink its teeth into your neck and take you down for your whole life, but since you know that so well, how do you plan to protect yourself against him? Tuck your neck? What are you willing to do, what do you know you have to do, when you're free again, to stay away from the vampire? Even if your homies are out in the streets, even if the street drama is so seductive, even if the world beyond the streets seems bland, can you save your sanity, your freedom, even your life and stay out of the streets? You are facing the same dilemma many young men are looking at, and it's gonna be a hard but crucial choice. So what will you do?

Fallen Homeboys

Rip Buggy, Creeper, Pelon, Speedie.
Every time I look up I can see the sky clearly
Because once a day once a month,
There's estrellas (stars) fallin' from
The sky and hittin' the graveyard and making
Mothers cry ...they say your home boys
Don't cry but we do, and it hurts inside
To see a homeboy fallin' from the sky
It's no ordinary thing to the homies
We don't smile now cry later --we cry now, smile later.

-Listo, Santa Clara

From The Beat: This is tragic, beautiful, sad, poetic. The homeboys don't only die because of their enemies. They also kill because of their enemies. And we believe the heart your poem is true - every time a young person dies a needless death because of these conflicts, NO MATTER WHICH "SIDE" he's on, a star falls from the sky. What can we do to keep our young people from shooting the stars out of the sky?

Elders Who Mess Up

What's up Beat? Well tonight I'm going to talk about elders.

They say always look up to them, but I did that and always respected them, and I do. But there those elders that get out of prison and I do respect them, but it seems like all they want me to do is mess up like they did. They tell me all these things that sound koo' but it seems like they are not trying to help me.

So why should I respect elders? Maybe I should just listen to the ones that are trying to help me, but how do I respect my elders that get out of prison without being disrespectful?

-Lil' Los, Alameda

From The Beat: This is a deep question. You're right... if you have elders who are caught up and living their lives wrong, then yes, you need to listen to what your own sense of right and wrong tells you. You can show them respect by speaking respectfully to them, but you don't have to follow any advice that might lead you in a direction that you don't want to go in. Among all of them, is there one you can look up to who has gone down a good path, who might have wisdom to offer you?

A Letter to My Grandmother

Dear Grandmother

Hi, First I want to say Rest in Peace and how is it heaven.

I know I am in a bad problem but I am going to beat this problem with a smile on my face, just like you told me. You know, you probably don't know this, but I am gon' always remember the day we was sitting on the porch and you told me that you were proud of me. I will never forget that, but I am writing this letter to you to tell you that I love you, and I am going to get my life together, and yes, I am going to walk the stage but I wish you could see me like you wanted to.

I still remember when you used to pick me up from school, and if I got in trouble you used to yell at me in front of everybody but even though I was embarrassed at the time I understand you why you did that. It was because you love me.

you know. So end this grandma and I say I love you, and I am going to take care of my little sister like you did, and tell my dad I said hey and I love him too, and save me a spot next to y'all.

RIP : Yolinda Maiden

-Lil' Majia, Alameda

From The Beat: Each week you come at us with so much heart that we think you'll never top it, but then the following week you hit us up with even more! Keep it up! Your grandma would be very proud of you if she could read this piece. Fulfill the promises you make here, in honor of her spirit. Peace!

I Love My Great Grandma

Hey, what's up with it Beat? This Lil' Bj just letting y'all know who I am before I write this piece. A special elder to me is my great grandma. I love her so much, she is 80 something years old, yeah it's a shame I don't know my own grandmother's age.

My great grandmother is the mother of my family, she's a Christian who is well respected in our neighborhood. I love her. She lived the longest so far in the family, and she's the one everyone runs to when they need someone to talk to.

I don't know what to do if I didn't have my great grandmother. I just hope she lives to see me go to college. Also she is one of the people who always visits me while I'm in camp. She is so wise even though everything she says I don't understand. But she's still a great great grandmother.

-Lil' Bj

From The Beat: That would be a beautiful day, you moving on to collect that college diploma, proud and knowing that you had lived up to your great-grandmother's hopes for you. Imagine what a great thing it is to put your hopes on.

Doobie

My cousin Doobie passed away -- some ninjas killed him on his porch. And I didn't now why but I seen him the day he got shot, and that was my bra. I went to school with him, and we was close. It hurt me because I used to see him once and a while, but I didn't mess wit' him, and now he gone.

When I'm disappointed, I try harder, but I get mad, and I go bad on people and make it worse on myself -- it makes to make ninjas think I'm aggressive towards the community. A memory that still hunt me is my ninja Doobie.

It still haunts me sometimes in my sleep.

-Cleve

From The Beat: The good thing amidst all this pain is that it sounds like you've truly come to understand something about yourself, and about what happens when you get mad, or upset. It's like the way you react makes things worse for you -- now that you understand this, do you think you might be able to come up with ways of dealing with disappointment that won't bring you more sorrow or struggle?

The Thing That Has You Laughing...

What's up Beat, this ya' boy Mangy-bo from Oakland. I arrived at Camp Sweeney about a week ago. It's better than Juvenile Hall, but I still get tired of just being here. You have to shhh, piss and shower in front of all boys.

This is definitely an experience to remember. I'll never forget this period of time being here. I wanna go home to my family. If a kid doesn't like to shower in front of boys, I would advise them not to break the law and stay out of trouble. Camp is easy. It's tempting to AWOL all the time, but you have to be strong and do your program. Because once you run, you'll either end up in Juvenile Hall or worse -- Santa Rita, or CYA.

The many things you take for granted on the outs, is the things that mean the most when you're in jail. Like Tupac say, "The thing that has you laughing is the same thing that will have you crying."

-Mangy-Bo

From The Beat: The more you hate it, the more it will stay with you as a place you just don't want to be. And that's what we're hoping happens here, because --once you've been locked out, it's better to "not break the law and stay out of trouble," just like you say.

Losing My Mother

A memory that still haunts me is the day my mother passed away on me, my two lil' brothers and sister. Because I had to watch over them like a father figure and that wasn't my job.

Even though I loved them, that shhh hurt me, I only lived with my mom for one year before she died, and that still haunts me till this day, because your mother is the most important person in your life.

So I enjoyed sharing that memory with you Beat, see you next time.

-Allen

From The Beat: Wow, so on top of losing the person you loved and needed most in the world, you also had to man up and take care of three children when you were barely out of childhood yourself... Would you share this story with The Beat -- you have a lot to teach.

I Gots To Breathe

Hold my head high and I lean,
On GOD

Sometimes life appears to be odd.

But believe me

Everything happens for a reason.

I'm not lyin'

And all of this be applyin'

To a ninja

Who be listenin'

I gots to breathe man.

I gots a vision

I'm seeing pictures

Maybe I'm seein' prison.

If I don't get my act straight

But baby I'm on a mission.

I gots to breathe

They say it's a hell on earth

Well I gots to leave

I'm tired of bleedin'

I'm hot and heavin'

My logic is speakin' the truth

But I'm not the preacher

Now tell me if I'm lyin'

I'm not sinnin'

I'm just speakin'

A ninja pitchin' fire

Only applyin' if you breathin'

And everybody's heart beatin'

So I'm the main attraction I'm needin'

-help from a real ninja

-help from a real G-sus

Now please answer my prayers

Present but never speakin'

Hesitant to never squeeze

They'll ship me off to Rita

And I gots to breathe

Open my eyes Lord

I gots to see

Let me count to two, three

The streets will never leave me

I'm posted where the heat be

...And I'm doin' me.

-HtwoOh Cal

From The Beat: The streets will never leave you, but when you say "I'm doin' me," we wonder what you mean. You have big dreams -- dreams of love, family, art, expression, success -- that the nightmare of the streets can never again give you. Reread this brilliant poem right here -- read it again and try to hear your own voice. It's power, it's pain, it's talent. You have it in you to leave the criminal life behind, and to REDEFINE being loyal to your streets.

Disappointment

I had a lot of disappointment in my life. The way I deal with disappointment is I take it out on other people, 'cause I get depressed and then I get mad. I used to have someone to talk to, but I don't anymore. It doesn't make me to better my self at all.

My mom and dad both disappoint me all the time. They are supposed to come visit me, but they never did. I disappointed the most important person in the world to me so many times, and I didn't mean to. That's what hurts the most, is to disappoint someone else that you love a lot.

I think 'cause I been disappointed so many times in my life that I am going to disappoint other people in my life, which I don't want to do. I think that's why I get angry a lot, cause I'm still holding some of the disappointment.

-Mark

From The Beat: Sometimes the best thing we can do is to look inward, which is what you have done. You know that you have been disappointed, but you hope to learn how to rise above it and give and receive love. This is a good start, and a beautiful part of who you are! A lot of it is about building trust. We hope that you will find someone to talk to. It might be an older person, or someone you don't know well (yet). Writing can also help us continue to understand ourselves and the way we think about situations and people.

That Woman

This woman I'm gonna talk about is my world. For example, if she gave me a good enough excuse, I would stick the president. This woman has always been there for me, way more than I have for her. This woman has always fed me, put clothes on my back, and took care of me when I was sick just as well as my mother did, if not better. She only spanked me once as a child. As some parents don't do, she apologized and we talked about it later.

For Christmas mornings, my presents were always stacked to the roof from this woman, even though they said "Santa", I knew that they were from that woman.

Every birthday that passes, she sends a box full of goodies and a card full of money. She always puts her signature smiley face on the envelope or the inside of the card. I love my grandma, and when I get out, I'll let her know by showin' her that I can do better than this shhh-hole. If anybody say something sideways about my grandma, best believe I'm takin' flight.

-Anthony

From The Beat: You are so lucky to have a grandma like this! And you're right: you can make her happy and repay her kindness when you get out by taking yourself seriously and living right! She showed you that love over the years to help you grow. Now it's your turn to show love, to her, to yourself, and to the world you live in.

Grandpa

The very special person in my life is my grandpa. No matter what I did, where I'm at, he is like my best friend. I could tell him anything and he won't judge me.

I usually go see my Papa every Saturday and Wednesday.

Since I'm in here, he comes to see me and he brings me hella food.

Well, he is getting pretty old, and I just want him to know that I love him and thank him for everything he has done for me—Love, Spring.

-Alexandria

From The Beat: Oh man, you are indeed very lucky to have a great grandpa. We hope that you will continue to listen and learn from him... he is probably very happy to know that his grandchild cares for him so honestly.

Respect-Disrespect

Respect: a lot of us have it, a lot of us want it. A lot of us disrespect, a lot of us done it. Which one do you want? It's up to you to choose which one you want. In order to get respect you must give it. If you disrespect, you will get it...

-Baby Tok

From The Beat: So it's like that saying, "what comes around, goes around". Right? We think so too. Do you ever feel torn about giving respect? Like, giving respect to a teacher or parent and respecting their wishes (go to school, stay out of trouble) might go against respecting an O.G. or a partner in the streets and doing what they want you to do. In that situation, do you respect the rules of your family or the rules of the game? What about respecting yourself?

Words of Wisdom

A special elder to me is my grandpa. He is the smartest person I know. If you had any question about pretty much anything, he would know the answer or how to get it. He is a knowledge hog and inspired his two sons to be the same way. He had experience in so many things, so you could ask his opinion and you could live your life off it.

-Irvtown

From The Beat: Your grandpa sounds like an amazing combination of knowledge and wisdom. You are lucky to have him in your life! Will you get to spend some time with him when you get released? What advice would he give you about staying out of trouble? Did any of his "knowledge hog" ways rub off on you? Like, do you dig reading or seeing new places?

Respecting Elders

An important elder is my grandmother because she is always there for me. An elder will give you more education because he or she may have more experience than you and they know what is best for you. I will never take advantage or disrespect them.

-Bubblelicious

From The Beat: We agree with you. We should all respect elderly people more.

Disappointment

I'm disappointed when another shuns another away
I'm disappointed when someone can't see another day.

I'm disappointed when I always come to jail,
always feeling like a test I've failed.

Disappointed when I have to go to my cell,
disappointed when people only have drugs to sell.

Disappointed when my questions are debated,
disappointed when my heart and soul are incarcerated.

Disappointed when another brotha dies,
leavin a deep scar in their hearts when their mother cries.

Disappointed when my brothas and sistas don't listen to
a good listener's fate,
and the only time they listen is when it's too late.

Disappointed with the mental and physical separation,
always smoking weed as if we were Jamaican or
Haitians.

Disappointed with the dark skies, but I still despise the
lies

that cause me not to grow and rise.
I'm a disappointed young man, as you can see.
But without disappointment how could life be?

I just deal with it.

-An Unknown Young Man In Juvenile Hall

From The Beat: It's true that disappointment is a part of life. Is there anything you could do to create less disappointment in your life? What are some things that make you feel hopeful?

OGT, My Barber

OGT is my barber. He guides my young life so I can make it farther. He been cutting almost all my life. He makes me look good and gives good advice, whether it's about money or girls. He shows me how to handle the world. The whole time I been in jail he was helping my mama, so I gotta say he more then a patna. Sometimes when everyone doubt me, he the only one that care about me. Teachin' me how to be a man, not how to hustle. That's why I refer to him as an uncle. He not an old ninja on the block, he a G. Always keep it real, OGT.

-Fly Ry

From The Beat: What a guy! He sounds very wise and generous. Can you hit him up for some more guidance when you get out of the Hall? Was he mad that you got arrested?

I Gotta Stop Coming Here

We just got played for hella rec time. I don't why, but we just came out at 8:15. I'm hella mad right now, but I can't do nothing about it. Since the topic [for tonight's workshop] says "how can you better yourself?" I need to get on top citizen while I'm in here cause they just got hella time out and they be getting phone calls when they work and extra food. I get mad a lot in here, but I can't do nothing about it that won't get me room time or a modified program. So I just be cool, to avoid all these things that make me angry in here. I gotta stop comin.

-Dirty D

From The Beat: We're sure that all your fellow Beat readers and writers will feel your pain and share your frustration. Incarceration is all about taking away a person's individual freedoms, large and small. You gave yourself some great advice... stop coming. How can you make this goal a reality? What will be the hardest part of staying out of trouble for you? We hope that you will start planning now and take control of your destiny.

Struggles

Sometimes the things that seem to hurt us the most are the very things that bring out the best in us. They are the struggles that help us discover the faith we thought we'd lost, the courage to let go of the past and begin again.

Challenges help us to see who we really are. Where we want to go, and what our lives can be, if only we have faith and keep on trying.

Money buys everything except love, personality, immortality, silence and peace.

We must be the change we wish to see in the world.

-Shadow

From The Beat: Thank you for the words of inspiration. How will you implement this message in your own life? What is the change you wish to see in the world? In your hood?

Just Doing Time

This is Dennis. I still find myself with closed eyes, imagining and dreaming while I'm in here, but when 7:00 hits, I find my dream and my fantasy to be over. Shutting my door and locking myself in a lonely room full of thoughts can really get to a person, but I tell myself to stay strong. It can only get to me if I let it. Time is hard, but time is a part of life. Knowing something is better out there for you makes time seem long, when there's something always on your mind. I know I'm gonna get over that hill because one day it will be my time.

-Dennis

From The Beat: And what will you do with your freedom, now that you realize that it is precious? Hopefully doing time won't be a part of your life again. Do you think it will?

Tookie

When I got jumped into my gang, I wanted to be like Tookie Williams because he was running hood and taking over hoods and everyone respected him in the hood. When Tookie had beef with people, he took care of his beef.

-Patrick

From The Beat: Tookie also changed a lot in the later years of his life in prison. He became an anti-gang activist while he was on Death Row and he was nominated for a Nobel Peace Prize for writing books to try to help young people stay out of gangs. He wrote that he regretted founding the Crips. Tookie Williams' last words were the following: "The war within me is over. I battled my demons and I was triumphant."

Disappointment

I've been disappointed a lot in my life. But I've never been disappointed like I am right now. I'm going through a tough time in my life at this time.

I was with a girl for one year and seven months, and I just recently broke up with her. I had to make that decision because she started prostituting. She met some girls at a program who told her that she can make tons of money. After a while she gave in and wanted to fit in with all these other girls. She didn't have anyone because I was locked up.

Once I found out what she was doing, I had to make the hardest decision of my life. I took care of her since we were hella young, and we ended up getting together. Since I wasn't there to support her financially and I couldn't give her my love, she got involved with some dirty shhh. Now she's begging for me back. I love her with all of my heart, but I need to trust her. Feel me?

-Jj

From The Beat: That is a heart-breaking decision. Is she still working? Do you think she would be willing to leave in order to make a new start with you? There are some good mentors and counselors at an organization in Oakland that work with young women who are trying to leave prostitution. If your friend is willing to talk to somebody confidentially, encourage her to call The Mentoring Center of Oakland at (510) 891-0427 or email tmc@mentor.org

My Memory

The thing that still disturbs me is when a group of people went up to me and my friends and they thought we were a part of another gang. We said "no" and they still kept talking bad about us. They started to push my friend around, so I pushed the guy and he pulled out a big knife. Then I calmed down and then they put it towards me.

Some people came out and saw what they were doing so they started walking away. My friend got mad and picked up a rock and threw it at them. Then we left and they didn't come back when he threw the rock. It still bothers me, because I could have died when they pulled that knife out at me. It haunts me once in a while, but not all the time.

-Alex

From The Beat: That sounds like a really scary situation, and we're glad that no one got hurt. The best thing to do at all cost is to avoid confrontation, 'cause that confrontation could be a death-wish, as it has been for too many young people.

My Mom

The special elder in my life is my mom, because no matter what I do she's always going to be there for me even if I do wrong and don't do what she says. She will still buy me clothes and give me money. She is my role model and my guardian angel.

-Passion

From The Beat: We hope that you appreciate your mother's love and give back to her sometime in the future. You can be her guardian angel.

How It Is

We put on a disguise to hide the truth
To mask the beauty and life of our youth
We scream, yell, bite, and fight
to make ourselves feel like everything is alright
but deep down below, we know that's not true
Just look at all the things we say and do
We always tell lies about things we have done
We hurt and kill people just for fun
We're all here in jail thinking it's cool
We do dumb things, constantly playing the fool
It's always on us to do what's right
but we make dumb decisions for just one fun night
But that's how it is
That's life.

-Li'l' Tb

From The Beat: You may see people making these bad decisions all around you, but it doesn't have to be your life. Taking personal responsibility is a big step, and sometimes it means turning your back on your homies, but it can also bring you freedom and self-respect. Your powerful poem is full of wisdom. We hope you will apply it to your life.

My Uncle

An elder in my life is my uncle. He told me about things in his life. Like fights in school. He tells me not to get into it in school, but most of the time, I don't listen. I fight because of my emotions. I don't like to share my feelings, I'd rather act it out. It makes people be more... well, not scared of me, but not letting them get away with shhhh they don't any day.

My uncle had the same problem when he was my age. He went to jail and found out the hard way. Even though I never back down from anything, I was weak in the mind, but not body-wise. I stopped fighting when someone shot at me. My uncle said if I didn't stop, that was going to happen.

-Maurice

From The Beat: Did almost getting shot change your attitude about fighting? We understand what you mean when you say that you would rather act it out than talk about it, but what about the act of walking away? It can be a powerful thing to do, and keep you out of trouble. Think about it. We all have our weaknesses, and getting in fights might be yours, but it is up to each of us to keep our own personal demons in check. If your uncle learned how to do it, so can you!

Never Again

When I first got out of jail the first thing I'm going to do is go get back enrolled in school.

Then I'm going to go see my baby mama make sure she straight and to get that goin' again. After that, feel me, I'm going to try to get me a part time job so I can support my daughter and be a dad that I never had.

The one thing I'm going to have to resist the most on the streets is the ninjas I been hangin' 'round, feel me?

I have to do me for a minute because it's seems every time I hang around negative crowds I end back up in here, but I cant resist money, that's why I'm going to get a job so I don't have to hustle no more. I'll be doing something positive to keep my PO off my back.

It will be tempting to start poppin' pills and robbin', but that ain't me no more and I'm goin' to change for the better and the sake of my daughter.

-G-Speedo

From The Beat: Wow, school is good, and taking the initial steps to making sure you and your child's mom are cool is a great step, yet be prepared for the worse too. Maybe she does not want to connect with you anymore? That's possible, right? We bet if you show all who care about you that you are serious about improving your life, that will be very encouraging. What kind of work will you like to do? For your daughter, change your ways!!

Disappointment

I deal with disappointment by getting upset, cussing, crying or other things, like keeping to myself. When there is a situation that does not end how I want it to, I pout because it's my way or no way.

It doesn't make me try harder to better myself because I resolve my feelings by just forgetting about it.

A person who disappoints me sometimes is my father. I depend on him to do stuff and it isn't done when I expect it to.

I think I disappoint my mom when she tells me to do things and it isn't done-- most of all, I really, really love her.

In this week's breakdown, disappointment and how they have played part in my life seems kinda weird because this is my first and last time in here. I just cry and keep to myself.

-Shay

From The Beat: Your feelings, although they overwhelm you, may be worth your acknowledgement. Your emotional reaction to your environment can tell you even more about yourself...the more you know, the more you grow.

Sisterhood

The person I am going to write about is my sister Shelle. She is thirteen plus years older than me. Every morning she takes me to school an when we're in the car, she turns the music down and tells me, "Nesha go to school have a good day. Don't let none of your friends get you in trouble. Go to class, have a nice day and don't let none of your friends get you in trouble. Make us proud and keep us smiling."

I love my sister for everything she does for me, and I love every one of my brothers an sisters. I love my sister for telling me that. I hope I can get back on track like I was before I came here.

For whoever reads this... keep your head up. School is the key to get out-- peace!!!

-Tanesha

From The Beat: Thanks for the encouragement. Your sister seems to give you a lot of hope and positive energy. We're all cheering for you to get on the track that you want to be on.

Back In The Hall

Man, yea.. I'm backing for not following the rules of (EM). Yea I messed up I told myself that I wasn't go' come back but I did.

Every single day I left home and went to school then hopped on the bus in front of O'High and went to the 'hood. I was suppose to go home instead.

I though I could get over on the' ass and stay out 'till like 6,7, or 8 o'clock. All I wanted to do was get high and grind so I could have a couple of hundreds in my pocket before I go in the house. And spend some time wit' my brothers since they don't stay wit' me and I don't get to see them all he time.

Anyway I got out of here on September 5th and had to go to court a month from then which was October 5th. The judge decides to have it on October 3rd, anyway I had got a bench warrant for missing court. I went to court on October 17th and something felt funny because they called me at the last minute and they detained me 'cause I was messin' up.

-Bra Sis

From The Beat: What have you learned from this!! Seriously. Take a good look at yourself and tell us! What we learn is if you don't follow the rules of the court they'll get you and that they did. Now what? Do you continue to break the rules? We hope not.

A Bad Memory

A memory that I will never forget is the day my grandpa kicked me out of the house. The reason why is because, that day, I met someone who changed my life forever. This is how it happened...

I woke up in the morning to get ready to go to summer school. When I got in the car, my grandpa dropped me off at school and told me not to come back home. I was like whatever, so I went on BART to go to Oakland.

When I got to the BART station she told me to not go to east Oakland but to go to north Oakland, so I did. When I got there, she told me to meet her at San Pablo Park. When I arrived, she came out of her house to talk to me. She told me I would have to sleep at the park. I got so mad because if I had gone to east Oakland, I would have had a place to sleep. While I was in the park, this boy kept looking at me. I became scared, so I jumped up and walked down the street. The boy ran up to me. He told me his name was Meresses. That night changed my life forever. Because of him, I did the things that put me in here.

-Bubbles

From The Beat: We are very sorry about that day-- you were given so little choices. You must know that whatever happens, you can always say no to things that can make you uncomfortable or get you in trouble. That is a choice you will always have.

Disappointed Myself

The only time I've been really disappointed was when I was disappointed at myself. I say I'm disappointed in myself because for the past two years, I've been trying to get out of the juvenile system.

Every time I finish a program and wait to be officially off probation, I end up messing up and making a stupid decision to either smoke, knowing I have to take a pee test before I get off probation, and I end up right back in jail. I then have to deal with another program, which takes six months.

Another example would be when I, being naïve, fall for a dude and leave thinking the dude wants to be with me and take care of me. I would go AWOL-- I turned myself in recently for making that decision. Now I'm just waiting for my next court date.

Lastly, I'm happy though because this just means that I'm a step closer to being home with my family because I've been gone for almost eight months.

-Lil' Nyomi

From The Beat: Your disappointment sounds like some deep growing pains. We hope that you are able to reunite with your family soon. You are not alone when you feel disappointed for making the same mistakes more than once. We hope you will be able to forgive yourself and feel better about yourself.

Temptation On The Mind

What's up beat this DJ man when I get out purple is calling my name. I smoke marijuana and I'm addicted. I need to stop that's the only way I'm gone stay free.

I will do whatever it takes maybe even dang counseling. I know right now I'm saying what I will try to do, but the real question is what's going to happen when I'm really free? I mean when it's in my face and nobody's watching me?

I will overcome temptation.

-Derrick

From The Beat: We hate to agree but your addiction will be the reason why you violate. Remember, counseling will only work if you are serious about changing. As for the future and your choices, well, it's all in your hands to do what's right!

Waiting for Court

Hello all ya'll reading The Beat! I'm hella nervous. No wait, not nervous, just anxious. I've got court tomorrow (the 24th). I'm not sure what they plan on doing with me so I'm just waiting to see what happens-- if they give me time in a group home or I will be asked to serve my max time. Well holla! I got to go now.

-Skittles

From The Beat: We wish you the very best. Whatever happens, keep writing to us and keep in touch.

A Poem

Sitting in jail is just like sitting in hell

No one to talk to,

No one to write to

I'm like, "was it my fault why I'm in here?"

I want to go home today but court day is another day
And I'm going to go home on the next court day as he
and they say.

I don't like hell, not even jail.

When I get out of jail I think that I'm going to hell I don't
want to go to hell,

And I don't want to come back to jail

I hate jail like I hate hell.

-Tf

From The Beat: Incarceration is not paradise. So we hope you do your part to make your life better for yourself when you get out! What is your plan upon getting out?

The Indoor Soccer Tournament

When I had the best night of my life was when we had a final in an indoor stadium. We played soccer and we tried our best so we can win and we won. But when I woke up the next day I was sore and couldn't wake up, for Saturday and Sunday was one of the best days. That was one of the best soccer games I've ever played in my life. I never got that tired either. We also won a trophy and some 1st place medals. It was a tournament in Concord and it lasted two days.

-Richard

From The Beat: Sounds like a great weekend full of competition. Nothing like indoor soccer for a good workout. What position do you play in soccer? How well did you do in the tournament? We hope you get yourself back out there on the playing field soon! Where do you play? What club?

My First Love Till This Day

My first love is crazy. Every single relationship had problems. If you don't have problems in your love life there is no point in being in love. At least that's what I think.

Love can make you do crazy things like, ditch your girls when you got plans that night, or hang out with cha boo when you know you're suppose to be home, or even stay out all night with that person and you know you was suppose to go home and then...you on punishment.

Do you think that he would do the same for you? Mine would. We've been together for a while, and he would do anything for me.

When I first saw him I told him I was gonna make him love me. And you know what? I was right. My first love till this day my whole life I will never forget this love. Without him, there is no me.

-Niki Pooh

From The Beat: Wait, without him, there is still you! We hope that even though you have found true love that you are still a whole person within the relationship.

Still Breathing

Through all the darkness inside my soul, I still will overcome my fear.

Through all the bad times in my life, I still will overcome through the evil soul inside me.

I still will stand tall through all the pain inside my heart

I still will love through all the wind and brightness

I still will reach for success through all the snow and drugs

I still will have respect through all the years of gang-banging

I am still breathing fresh air.

Through all the hard times I had, I still put God first and pray for help.

-Shadow

From The Beat: We hope that you will continue to breathe fresh air, find strength in your faith, and keep learning and trying new things. Sometimes we put ourselves in jails of the mind, on the outs, thinking things can't change and we are stuck. What old habits do you hope to break? We see you growing and hope that you won't come back to the Hall.

I Ain't Comin' Back

When I get out of jail I'm going to get enrolled in school and go everyday and do what I got to do to get off probation and then I'm just gonna stick with my girl and just be cool and I'm gonna start going to church every Sunday with my grandma and other family members 'cause I need to change my life around because I'm tired of comin' here.

This is my fourth time here and my last time comin', because jail ain't cool, it just makes me think about how I don't want to come back.

When I get out I will not doing nothing bad - like robbing people, shooting guns, I'm just gonna do everything right, because I do not want to come to juvenile hall, it's not where it's at, real talk.

-Lil' Fuda

From The Beat: You say a mouthful throughout, particularly in your opening paragraph. We hope you stay true to your words and make not only you but your whole family proud!

The Monster Is Me

The most known monster in my life is me, because I'm doing what I want and making my family's life messed up, day by day, by me not giving a shhh about and and not paying any mind to it at all, and just getting locked up and now I need my family. That's the monster that I know, me.

-Jesus

From The Beat: You recognize the monster, now how bad do you want to correct this monster? We hope you are serious about finding ways to clean this monster up and out of your life!

The Monster Is The Hood

My monster is the hood 'cause it is so much trouble I can get in

but I can't fear the hood 'cause it is the way I live drugs and alcohol in my environment 'cause it is so easy to get

alcohol from the stores and weed is easy too and all the other drugs

young people dying

my monster is the hood.

-Vernell

From The Beat: We so understand what you say, but we wish there was a solution to the drug and violence in our communities that are destroying families on the daily. We are in a war that has no end in sight. Any thoughts? We say start with taking care of you! Get yourself in school!

An elder

My grandpa is really special to me. I think he is also special because his birthday is on Christmas. He also always encouraged me to go to school and make something out of myself. When I used to come home with something lower than a 2.0 grade point average, he would be upset. His name is Frank.

-Beverly

From The Beat: Do other people in your family spend as much time as your grandpa to encourage you to do well in school? How does your grandpa encourage your efforts at school that is different from the other people in your life?

My Mom

I knew my mom until I was five, then she was gone. I got to see her in the summer for two months or so every year, then she was back when I was in the 8th grade.

We drove with her at the end of summer break from Oklahoma to California that's a long ass drive.

I always got along with her. I thought it would be all good when she got back, boy was I tripping.

I didn't get along with my dad before she got back. I lived with my dad and saw my mom on Tuesdays and Wednesdays and every other weekend. My mom would trip over little stuff or stuff she didn't understand 'cause I live a different life than the rest of my family.

Then my dad went to jail and I moved in with my mom and it's been heaven and hell. It was bad to the point she kicked me out and I ain't live with my mom for almost two years until I get out of jail.

-No Name

From The Beat: Sounds like it's been one hard road. We hope at the least you work on you and get yourself in a good place and from there you can take the steps in either working on a better relationship with your mom and your dad, or staying away altogether, that is if you have the positive support to do so.

Not the Life I Want to Live

Jail is boring. They tell you what to do and when you have to take a shower and for how long. They tell you at what time to go to sleep. They give you a time of how long you get to eat your food, and that's not the life I want to live.

-Jeffrey

From The Beat: Good! Now tell us about the life you DO want to live, and how you plan on achieving it.

The Monster

My monster is myself
it's also my hood

I know I can't just leave my hood
my hood became a part of me
that's why my hood and myself is the monster.

I don't fear cause it's a part of me
I'm not scared of myself and I'm not scared of my hood
but I'm scared of what might happen to me
when I leave the hood
because most of the people get killed when they leave the hood

they think because they ain't doing nothing to nobody
anymore it's all good

but your passed always catches up to you.

That's my only monster.

-Lil' Mikey

From The Beat: Leaving the hood is a great idea, still. Yes you cannot erase the past, but you lessen the odds of getting in trouble by leaving your evil ways and doing something much more productive!

I Try

I try to stay out and to do what I have to do to get out and be with my family, but I just don't try that hard to do that 'cause I keep coming back in here, so now I know to try harder in life and to get out.

-Jesus

From The Beat: You're trying, but how hard are you trying to stay out? What keeps getting in your way?

The Money And Drugs Temptation

To me my highest temptation is the money and the drugs because I live on a drug spot. I might be able to resist because when I get out im going to be on E.M so im not going to be able to go far. When I get off E.M im just going to find something to keep me occupied and help me stay from the streets.

-Lil' Mikey

From The Beat: You have a tough choice to make, especially if where you live all the shhh jumps off. WE agree with you in keeping yourself occupied, but what will you do? Is it a part time job? Is it working at The Beat Within? What?

Disappointment

The only person who disappointed me was my grandma. When they called her and to tell her that I was in here, she said, "keep her." She didn't want to talk to me and that disappointed me, but I still love her.

-Passion

From The Beat: It is kind of you to still love and accept your grandma, even after what she said...although her words may come from feeling heartbroken rather than anger.

Food

Hammock split peas fried chicken swiss cheese
Apple sauce red tomatoes rice-a-roni baked potatoes
Chitlins collard greens chile peppers pinto beans
Macaroni sandwiches hot links tuna fish
Pepperoni veggie soup dried salami grapefruit
Jalapeños celery eggplant broccoli
Pineapple chicken noodles orange juice apple strudels
Blueberries raspberries strawberries red cherries
Grape juice cereal Honeynut Cheerios
Waffles pancake French toast cupcakes
Sour cream fried eggs pigsfeet chicken legs
Cheeseburgers mangoes peanut butter gumbo
Hot dogs chile beans Oreos ice cream
Pizza hog head biscuits cornbread.

-Batman

From The Beat: Nice. Wouldn't it be cool if you read this aloud!

Money Is Evil

The highest temptation on the streets for me is going to be a change the way I do everything - maybe money, who I hang out with, and how I carry myself. Its important that I change these things because I ain't trying to end up in here, I got too many responsibilities to keep heading up back in here. I know my biggest temptation is going to be money. No matter how tempting its gonna be I'm going to have to do my best not to slip up because I refuse to end up back in here.

-Lil' Will

From The Beat: The choice is yours and it sounds like you are pretty serious about changing your old ways. Best to you!

The Hall Haunts Me

The only thing that haunts me is this-- I shouldn't be here. At night, I think about it and it will haunt me and I think it will even when I get out.

-Passion

From The Beat: We bet! Sure, being locked up will stay with you forever. WE hope you do your part to turn this haunting thought into something positive!

A Drunkin' Memory That Still Haunts Me

It was late February. My brother, some of my partners, and I were in the hood. We bought a fifth of gin and a gallon of orange juice.

My brother told me not to drink too much because he didn't know how much I could hold. So, I took a couple sips, but it wasn't doin nothin'. I was getting hella mad.

We had an iPod and some loud ass speakers and we were going hella dumb.

All that time, I'm just drinkin' and drinkin' and drinkin'. I was feelin a little tipsy. I drank more than anybody else. I took the last little sip and "boom" I became hella drunk. I started stumbling around like crazy. I almost ran into a lady trying to get to the bathroom at the Mexican restaurant.

After awhile, I couldn't move. I threw up on my brother's pants and jacket. I threw up in the bathroom. I threw up on the bus hella times. I really thought I was gonna die that night. I wouldn't eat and I was crying and cussing everybody out. As soon as we got to the room, I was knocked out! My brother said he was scared and he couldn't wake me up for nothing.

That memory will forever haunt me and remind me not to drink that much again-- especially on an empty stomach.

-MiMi

From The Beat: Whew! We're glad that you survived the drinking binge and that you are now much more careful about putting alcohol in your body. It's important that you care about your safety and well being to not repeat that scenario, again.

Disappointment From Al

Well I don't know how to explain disappointment because everyone has made me feel disappointed...my mama, daddy, uncle and grandma. So, I can care less about them. But the person I hurt most was my pa-pa for coming here.

-Alexandria

From The Beat: We wonder how those people have disappointed you? How did you feel after they have let you down? If, one day, you feel okay to share...

An Elder

Some people may talk about their grandparents, not me. It might sound crazy to ya'll, but some of the older knocks is important to me. Even though they probably be out they mind some time they still look out for me.

They'll be like "Lil' youngster boy, get yo' ass to school." And outta respect fo' them, I just said f- it and went to school. They show me love all the time.

They told me to quit grindin', and I didn't listen. Now look where I'm at.

-Lil' Loe

From The Beat: Encouragement and respect can come from anywhere and anyone. They probably saw your potential to rise above even the ugliness of the streets, and in some ways, your respect from them was really a kind of respect for yourself, no? Do you think that this time around, you'll really quit grindin'? We hope so!

Six Thoughts, Six Topics

1. The Things I Miss

I miss walking with my mom and being free. When I get I'm gon' do better with my life instead of waste it on people who don't care. My patnas or homies care but not more than my mom, dad and other folks at home.

Besides, my brother needs me. If I leave his life, he gon' be just like me, saying this is all he know. Since I been in here I'ma teach and tell my brother what it's like being in here, so he cain't end up in jail or dead. Peace Beat.

2. I Miss My Mom

I miss my mom. At every visit I get, seeing her through that glass hurts me, and seeing her cry and stress hurts me the most. Sometimes I wish I could just be there with her.

The day I woke up I decided to do better so I could see her soon so far It's been going well I've been on top citizen in all that. When you stay in a room it gets you depressed and sad. I guess it depends on what kind person you are.

3. Why Should I?

Why should I listen to you when I got a brain of my own and I can listen when I want to but I don't cause what's the point if they tell us the same shhh everyday just like the clothes we wear everyday.

4. I Got Plans

Unlike some people, I got plans when I get out and changes to make. But before I can do that, I got to stay focused on getting and keeping a positive attitude, especially since I'm am in Max. They don't play, and I don't care, because they shouldn't. We in jail.

I just hope that damn judge don't give me more time for being here 'cause I can barely do the time they gave me. Peace Beat I'm Gone.

5. Disappointment

Disappointment makes me mad some times I take it out on my door cause I can't take it out on staff I try harder when I no I'm wrong so the next time I can come correct with the mistake I made.

6. I Feel Good

Yo what's up Beat, I finally feel good about being a man and doin' my time. It may have took me a while to realize that I have to be responsible for my own actions. In a couple of days or so, my girl gon' write me. At first she couldn't cause felt real bad for me. I hope this place teaches everyone a lesson, 'cause I learned mind and I also learned to appreciate the things I used to not care so much about, like food and salt, juice, soda, and real soap.

-Lil' Dauce

From The Beat: We put all your pieces together because each one represents a different piece of who you are, what you've been through, what you are learning, where you've been. You write with such heart and real feeling that we wanted everyone to have a chance to read all the pieces you are in one place! Keep writing while you're in here, your writing strengthens The Beat!

Get Tired

I get tired of being in jail, I get tired of people telling me lies. I get tired of people trying to be hard when they come in here they comp in here make stuff worse that when they got to stop if they don't you have to make them.

I just get tired man.

-Lil' C

From The Beat: You know how they say that if you put rats in a cage they will fight each other. Well that's what it's like on lockdown too! Lockdown brings out the worst in people, and like you said - it's tiring. What do you do to pick yourself up when you start to feel like that?

A Few Important Details

For me if your really serious about not coming back to jail here a few details
stop hangin' around ninjas that's gonna bring you down
stay up, don't act on instinct just 'cause you from the hood

you don't have to put on a show and act like a clown
'cause when you by yourself facing 25 to life
you cry and put on a frown

-Lil' Dizil

From The Beat: We appreciate the words of wisdom, we hope if anyone follows your words of advice it is you and all others follow!

The Controlling Monster

A monster is something you let control your life
have you scared waking up in the middle of the night
when things are going wrong, you try to think right
monster can be a bully, someone that wants to fight
they only scare you in the dark 'cause they scared of the light

you can always blame someone else
when you know deep inside a monster is a person who
scared of someone
when they come out and try to hide
scared deep down inside

even though he doesn't want to go he still goes for the ride

but to beat that monster inside you must have pride.

-Lil' Dizil

From The Beat: How does it get to the point of having a monster control you? How do you stop this? We suggest you or anyone who carries this monster to find the light! Get yourself clean and sober and work towards getting off probation and getting your diploma!

My Mom is My Special Elder

The special elder in my life is my mom 'cause no matter what I do she's always going to be there for me even if I do wrong and don't do what she says she still going buy me clothes and give me money that's ma role model and ma guardian angle.

-Passion

From The Beat: We're glad your mom loves you, unconditionally! Do you live with her only, or also with your grandma?

My Mom Plays Mom and Dad

The special elder in my life is my mom. She sprinkled lots of love on me my whole life. I don't know what I would do without my mom. I would lose everything if anything ever happen to my mom.

My mom is a good role model and she play mom and dad.

My mom is my best friend and everything else. I'm going to always love my mom until the day I die.

My mom did so much for I don't even think I can repay her. All I want to do is change my life for her and she would be proud. If I would of listened to her I wouldn't be in jail.

My mom has been showing me love since I was a baby. I just wish I could just take everything back that I did and just do what I can to repay my mom. All that I have to do is to stay out of trouble and change my life.

-Michael

From The Beat: Wow - we hope we meet your mom one day, she sounds like a true inspiration. What are the most valuable lessons she had taught you about life? Tell us how she has taught you inner strength.

My First Love 'Till This Day

My first love is crazy. Every single relationship had problems, if you don't have problems in your love life there is no point in being in love. At least that's what I think.

Love can make you do crazy things like, ditch your girls when you got plans that night, or hang out with cha boo when you know you're suppose to be home, or even stay out all night with that person and you know you was suppose to go home and now you on punishment.

Do you think that he would do the same for you? Mines would. We've been together for a while and he would do anything for me. When I first saw him I told him I was gonna make him love me. And you know what? I was right. My first love till this day my whole life I will never forget this love. Because without him there is no me.

-Niki Pooh

From The Beat: We want to support you because true love is a beautiful thing. But true love also makes you stronger, better, more confident in yourself and what you need to do on a given day. The kind of love that makes you sacrifice yourself, do wrong by others, betray your family rules, and feel like "without them there's no you" can sometimes be a bad kind of love, the kind that hurts, gets you in trouble, causes suffering. Just our two cents. Are we wrong?

The Memory Of Getting Shot

When I was at my block and some ninjas hopped out, they started busting at me and I ran, and my homie hit a gate. When I was hitting a gate I got shot!! That's what haunts me.

-Crazy

From The Beat: We're sorry to hear that you got shot, but grateful that you're alive to tell the tale of it. What happened? What ran through your mind when it happened? Who was with you at the hospital?

It Was Late February....

Me, my brother, and some of my patnas was out on the street.

We had bought a fifth of gin and a gallon of orange juice. My brother told me not to drink too much because he didn't know how much I could hold.

So I took a couple sips, but it wasn't doin nuthin'. I was getting hella mad. We had a iPod and some loud ass speakers and we was going hella dumb, and all that time I'm just drinkin' and drinkin' and drinkin'.

I was feelin' a little tipsy.

I drunk more than anybody, most of the drank. I took the last little sip and "boom" I was hella drunk. I started stumbling around like crazy. I almost ran into a lady tryna get to the bathroom at the Mexican restaurant.

After awhile I couldn't move. I threw up on my brother pants and jacket, I threw up all in the bathroom, I threw up on the bus hella times. I really thought I was gonna die that night. I wouldn't eat and I was crying and cussing everybody out.

As soon as we got to the room I was knocked out! My brother said he was scared and he couldn't wake me up for nothing. That memory will forever haunt me and remind me not to drink that much again. Especially on an empty stomach.

-MiMi

From The Beat: Ugh. We know that everyone has that one story, the time when they drink so much they think they'll never pull out of it. We hope that was your last time, because that sick feeling is one of the worst ones you can have! And it's a blessing you made it home safe and sound, and had that narrow escape.

My Grandma's Disappointed Me

The only person who disappointed me was my grandma 'cause when they called her and told her that I was here and she said keep her and she didn't want to talk to me. That disappointed me, but I still love her.

-Passion

From The Beat: It's good to hear that you forgave your grandma - and we hope that by now you and she have worked out the troubles that made her so angry. What finally happened?

Breakdown

I deal with disappointment by getting upset cussing, crying, or other things like stay to myself. When there is a situation that does not work out how I want it to, I pout because it's my way or no way.

It doesn't make me try harder to better myself because I try to keep my mind off the issue. I resolve my feelings by just forgetting about it. People that disappoint me sometimes is my father. When I depend on him to do stuff and it isn't done when I expect it to.

I think I disappoint my mom most when she tells me to do things and it isn't done. This week I'm gonna breakdown from disappointment and how it has played part in my life. It's kinda weird because this is my first and last time in here, and I just cry and keep to myself.

-Shay

From The Beat: With all the sadness in here, there is one thing that we just love. We love to hear "first and last time in here." So tell us your plan - what will you do to make that plan come true?

Disappointed in Myself

The only time I've been really disappointed is in myself. I only say I'm disappointed in myself because for the past two years I've been trying to get out the juvenile system, and every time I finish a program and I'm waiting to be officially off probation, I end up messing up and making a stupid decision, like I smoke, knowing I have to take a pee test before I get off probation. And I ending up right back in jail and then having to deal with another program which takes like six months.

Or another example would be when I would leave, being naïve and falling for a dude and leaving thinking the dude wanted to be with me and take care of me so I would go AWOL. I turned myself in recently for making that decision.

Now I'm just awaiting my next court date.

Lastly, I'm happy though because this just means that I'm a step closer to being home with my family because I've been gone for almost 8 months.

-Lil' Nyomi

From The Beat: It takes a lot of strength to turn yourself in when it's so hard being locked away without freedoms. We're glad you did it though, and glad to hear that you will soon be home with your family! Forget about these dudes with their false promises! Take care of you, and stand tall until you meet someone who has his own (legit) life together!

My Grandmother

My important elder is my grandmother, because she is always there for me. An elder will give you more education, because he or she may have more experience than you and they know what's always best for you. I will never take advantage or disrespect.

-Bubblelicious

From The Beat: Educationwise, what's the most important thing your grandma ever taught you? What is the most valuable gift she gave you, in terms of knowledge?

My Grandpa, My Best Friend

The very special person in my life is my grandpa. No matter what I did, or where I'm at, he is like my best friend.

I could tell him anything and he wouldn't judge me. I usually go see my papa every Saturday and Wednesday, but since I'm in here he comes to see me and he be bringing me hella food.

Well he getting pretty old and I just want him to know that I love him and thank him for everything he has done for me.

-Alexandria

From The Beat: He comes to see you and brings you food? That's love - it's good to hear you have someone who cares about you enough to bring you what you want. What do you think his dreams are for your future?

Smart Pet

If my pet could talk he would be the smart one, and I could tell him what to do Like, say we at the park and I see a fine woman. I got tell my dog to go talk to her and then I'd tell him to come back to me.

Then I would go back over there with him she what she working with. After that, me and my dog will have hella fun goin' everywhere smoking hella weed. He'd be hanging like he one of us.

-No Name

From The Beat: Your dog could be a great wingman, you're right. But FYI, weed doesn't make dogs high or happy, it makes them sick and they hate it. Giving a dog weed or alcohol is like abusing them, and they'll take the abuse because of how much they love you. Kinda like people that way!

I Gotta Deal With It

I am disappointed, because the judge is holding my release. I am very disappointed, because I could have been out there with my family and hangin' out with my friends, but instead I'm stuck here. Man I am disappointed, and I miss eating real food and wearing my own clothes, 'cause I hate wearing these county clothes.

But I gotta deal with it 'cause I can't do nothing about it.

-Ernesto

From The Beat: We hope you hate those county clothes so much that you vow never to wear them again. Meaning that you make the deepest promise you ever could, to yourself, that you'll never ever put yourself in a lockdown situation! Good luck, and when we see you again, we hope it's in our offices and not in these halls!

95 Years In the Game

The most important elder in my life is my grandfather. He is my best friend. I talk to him about anything! When I'm having trouble with school or peer pressure, he's right there telling me life stories. Of course I may get bored listening sometimes, but when he's done talking I realize that I've learned a lot. I also talk to him about boy problems.

He has 95 years in the game, so he knows all the tricks that boys play. Also he is a pastor. I always talk to him when I need guidance about god. My granddad doesn't judge me, but he helps me figure out when I'm right or wrong.

I love my grandpa! And I know he loves me!

-Mimi

From The Beat: Wow, 95 years! That's deep. Next time he comes to visit you - do a little interview with him and write down what he says. We'd be honored to print the wisdom of an elder with that much knowledge!

A Memory Of His Death

A memory that still haunts me is the first time I seen one of my homies die. I was only 10 and I seen more as I grew up. It used to bother me, but it don't do anything to me no more.

And what really haunts me is that now I have no remorse for nobody... not even myself.

-Lil' G

From The Beat: It's true that many of the people who have been through a lifetime of the kinds of pain you have experienced and seen "forget" how to feel. It's like as the world gets colder and colder, their heart turns to ice. You haven't reached that point yet - and we can see that by the passion in your writing - the pieces we'll be publishing in upcoming issues. You still have heart, and your heart is still warm. It's on YOU to keep it that way.

Sitting in Hell

Sitting in jail is just like sitting in hell, no one to talk to, no one to write to. I'm like, was it my fault why I'm in here?

I want to go home today but court day is another day and I'm going to home on the next court day, they say.

When I get out of jail I think that I'm going to hell

I don't want to go to hell and I don't want to come back to jail I hate jail, like I hate hell.

-Tf

From The Beat: Hey what makes you think you're going to hell? Have a little more faith in the goodness of your heart - and worry about your actions in THIS life, the part you can control. First things first: What would you need to change in your life to stay out of jail?

Where Do I See Myself In Ten Years

Well in two years I see myself graduating from high school, and working to save up money, so I can have my own place to lay my head down and call my own.

After high school, and I get myself situated, I'm gonna plan to go to college so I can get my major in welding. I'm 'bout to do underwater welding cause you make 300 an hour and that's good ass money. But if that happens it'll be a good start to my life. But I got to get out of jail to do the things that I want to do. that's what I plan to be in ten years.

-Ar

From The Beat: Underwater welding! That's great! Do you like mechanics? Is that something you've been interested in for a long time? Where will you go to study it?

It is Love

You the one I wanna spend my life with
Have kids and die with

Argue and fight with

Never been that type of ninja

But at the end of the night you my b—

Not meaning to use that word

But you my chick

Spend quality time with

Hold hands and cry with

Promise to never lie and deny shhh

Just say I did it, and let's continue bein' us

Because whatever happened before

You and I could never replace us

Trust that you are mine and I am yours

And it is love.

-Calvester

From The Beat: You are a true poet, and with all the rage that your words contain and express, they also express a great longing... for love, for stenght, for more than what you have. We hope you get it.

What's Up Beat?

It's Lil' Capy from Oakland. I'm 'bout to write about my life. Well when I was 11 years old when I started bangin'. I never thought about my life being like this. I used to just kick it with my homies, just ridin' around in stolos and smoke weed and bust licks and try to get some money. But as time past some of my homies got killed and some got locked up. I never knew my life was gonna end up like a movie, getting shot at and getting in high speeds.

Now my life is getting worse by the day, my homies are leaving me, getting killed, and my homies are in jail. This is people I grew up with, and now I'm not gonna see them for a coo' minute.

Now I stress, missing my homies Dash, G-Money, Lil' Gart, Lil' Goofy, especially my homie Lil' Art, he was like my brother. We kept it real out in these streets, every since my homies left me I said screw this life. I be posted on the block waitin' for my time to go. I don't care nothing about my life no more, because I got my RIP homies waiting for me on the other side.

To all keep your heads up.

-Lil' Capy

From The Beat: This was a very powerful, sad piece. You have seen and suffered a lot more in your few years on earth than many people have in a lifetime, and especially, losing so many people you care about. How do you handle the grief? They say that what doesn't kill you makes you stronger, but is that true? Is all this suffering making you stronger, because colder isn't stronger, it's just darker.

RIP Tony

Tony, it's hard to say goodbye to you. We all love you little cousin, I'll always love you and in my heart I'll always miss you. You always help me be the right way. I hope I see you at heaven and your family always loves you.

Rest in Peace, Tony, you are the cool guy. You always make somebody laugh and you always try to help your family and I hope everyday still remembers you.

-Lil' Danny

From The Beat: It's beautiful that even with the sadness of losing someone, you've still managed to remember everything about Tony that made you smile, that kept you straight, that made him try to help people.

Your Soul

What inspires me the
Most - you
Love
The way you handle a
Situation when a
Brother
Mess up
The way you dedicate
Your love just so
That I can feel
Your soul
You took my soul and
Gave me yours in
Exchange
The sacrifice we made
Two become one
We bonded our souls into one
And the wildest night ever
9 months later, a star.
What is love to you.

-Mt. Hefner

From The Beat: We're betting that star is a new life you and your girl brought into the world. And if it is, what kind of changes has having this "star" made in how you look at the world, and how you and your girl relate to each other?

A Whole New Life

Me getting out is a whole new beginning for me in life.

I have so many plans for me when I get out of camp. I plan to not come back but it's hard to just walk away from the stuff you've been doing your whole life. I been in camp for six months on the first, so I'm about to get out.

All I do is be thinkin' about not having to look at these staff and other ninjas at camp run they mouth, not sleepin' next to somebody I ain't known for' that long, wearin' my own clothes and takin' a shower by myself, and using the bathroom. So the message I'm tryna send out is this county locked up stuff ain't coo'. If you go, do yo' thang. In tha streets be solid, and don't draw hella attention to yo' self. You ain't gotta be all-out wit' what you do, so be unda.

My plan is to not put myself out there like what ever I'm doing don't all the people I know have to know, 'cause that's how people get aught up. I got a coo' lil' job so I gon' be coo' I'm still doin' my thang ya know.

-Lonnie

From The Beat: It worries us to hear you say you plan to keep doing anything "on da unda." We know one way, and one way only, to guarantee not getting caught back up by the law - and that is to turn squeaky clean. What do you think? Could you do that?

Almost an Adult

What up Beat? This Aboo, again. I'm over here with Lil' Capy and Sparks they over there trying to calm me down because I tried to run from here, but they said to pimp this program. And they were telling me to think about it, because I'm going to have a baby on the way and I'm almost 18 years old. So them help me to stay in camp and pimp it. Right on my ninjas.

-Aboo

From The Beat: We're glad you have people to support you and remind you NOT to run! Especially now that two things have happened that are pushing you to being a real adult: Turning 18, and getting ready to become a father. How do you think "adulthood" will change your life? Are you making new plans to go with your new situation?

Twisted

Caught up in the game
Getting' hot like flame
Homies gettin' lame
My mind going insane
Twisted once again
Always want to win
Might end up in the pen
Forgive me for my sin
It won't happen again
Banging since the age of ten
Hanging with a friend
Never once pretend
Everything getting old
On the mission to get cold
Blessed with a special soul
Thinking things twice before I do it
Could have got some man, I really blew it
Writing my way out of this paper
Come back soon,
I'll see you later.

-Big Head

From The Beat: Now we know why you're called Big Head - because of the big brain that it has to make room for. It shows in this poem, which we saw you write in like ten minutes, and in your vocabulary, and verbal skills. So put that Big Head to work and tell us your Big Headed plan for success when you get out of camp. Don't just write your way out on paper, write your way out of jail!

Punching The Walls

I disappointed my mom and girl. I get angry in here and punch the walls. There's nobody I could hit but the walls, and it makes me think of what I did and it was a very bad decision.

I disappointed my mom first of all, because she would always tell me not to hang around with people that she told me to not be with.

I didn't listen to her, and now because I didn't listen to her I'm in here just thinking.. I should of listened and I wouldn't be punching walls. I also disappointed my girl cause she is three months pregnant and now that I'm in here she needs me more than ever.

I hope I could be by her side right now, and I am very sorry for disappointing these two beautiful women in my life.

-Richard

From The Beat: It sounds like when you punch the walls, you're really punching yourself because you're so mad at yourself for being locked up! But you have two loved ones to go back to, and we hope you get reunited with them soon. Also, do you have plans to find some more positive friends, or a program to help you make it through the stresses of life out there?

A Brick Through The Window

A memory that haunts me is one day when I was kickin' back in my lady's living room, rollin' up some weed, when a brick flew through the window and glass went everywhere.

I was hella spooked and I went outside to find a group of rival gang-members in the street calling me out. So I ran towards them, but I didn't know what I could do, so I just started to swing and all of them jumped me, took one of my shoes and cut.

I hate this memory, it makes me trip out now. Like when I'm kickin' it outside, smoking a cigarette, and paranoid about getting jumped.

This is one memory that I wish never happened.

-Lil' Los

From The Beat: Just today we read about how 11 members of a journalist's family were killed in Iraq - not because of anything they did but just because of being related to him. It shows just how much danger the innocent get put in whenever there are enemies. It's scary to think about how they came to your girl's house looking for you.... it seems like block by block, nation by nation, people are still fighting. But you sound like you've turned a corner, and you are done with this war. Is this true?

My Grandparents

The most important elders in my life are all three of my grandparents: My grandma, grandpa, and Nana.

My grandparents have done so much for me in my life. I can't even remember it at all. I lived with both sides of my heritage my black side and my Panamanian side. My black side always rewarded me, especially if I was following the rules of my nana's house which is my nana as well as getting decent grades.

She raised me and my big brother most of our lives because my mom and dad were in and out of trouble, and I respect her for that. I also am thankful for my grandpa and grandma because they took me in when my mom couldn't control me and was giving me the boot.

They made my holidays the best a ninja could have. I remember on my 15th birthday I got more than four hundred dollars to spend on whatever I pleased and on Christmas I got to write things that were expensive, not including clothes on the side. I am grateful for my grandparents and I thank God that they are all still alive.

-G-Speedo

From The Beat: What an awesome appreciation of your elders! What have you learned about how to live life right from them. Do you feel like they understand the pressures you are under out in the streets? Have you figured out how you will live life right when you are free? Tell us more about these four powerful people and how you think things will be with them in the future!

RIP Big Mama

Some kind of elder I remember is my great grandma A.K.A Big Mama. She was so wise and yet I could see in her eyes that she been through a lot. She was born in 1885, and all b.s. to the side and died when she was a hundred and seven years old.

I learned not a lot, but some from her, like that she believes in discipline. One time when she was younger back in Louisiana, she whooped my dad and my dad ran to my grandma, and he was crying. She said what happened, and he said a horse kicked me (LOL) and Big Mama whopped him again.

Rest In Peace Ester Hayes aka Big Mama 107.

-Lil' Dzil

From The Beat: Man, we would never want to get on Big Mama's bad side. Thanks for sharing this funny story, which made us impressed AND a little bit afraid of your great grandma!

Broken Promise

Que-vo Beat. This is your boy Chino, from that big bad city of Hayward. Today I'm gonna talk about when I was disappointed in myself. It all started when I got released from Juvenile Hall, I promise myself that I wasn't gonna get locked up again. But two weeks later I came back in for another 2-11 case.

-Chino

From The Beat: Breaking promises to ourselves sometimes hurts even more than breaking them to other people. We're sorry you found yourself back in this situation, but on the other hand, maybe you can learn from the mistake? Like, tell us what kicked off the chain reaction that landed you back in here? How could you do it differently next time?

My Grandpa and My Dad

My most important elders in my life are my grandma and dad. My grandma is important to me because she's always there for me. If I need to talk or just need someone to love me. She is the most generous person I know, she is always giving money to charity and to her children and grand-children. She has always helped in my life because she was the one that persuaded me to become a Christian and become a better person.

My dad is an important elder in my life, because he helps with anything if I'm ever in trouble with the law or with my sports. Or, he helps when I'm just hurting.

He doesn't like me getting locked up, but he's still there for me if I screw up and he still loves me for who I am. He's always there watching me play and cheering me on and he is so encouraging to me it helps me succeed and helps me want to try harder at what I do.

When I turned thirteen, that's when all my problems started I started smoking weed with my older sister. By the beginning of the summer I started drinking at parties and running away, but my dad helped me see that I wasn't helping myself by what I was doing and I how I was living but I didn't listen and I've hurt him so much but he still loves me and it has shown me I need to take action for what I'm doing.

-Kramen

From The Beat: Your Dad sounds like a truly loving person, and like you said, he's got your back. Have you talked to him (or your grandma) about how things will be when you get out of juvy? What went wrong the first time? What kinds of things are you (or they) going to do differently this time around.

Life Ain't Fair

I have a lot of disappointments in my life. Sometimes I think stuff goes bad for me for a reason, but then I don't know.

It seems like everything I do something ends up happening. Say like in the Hall, I'll be good on top citizen but I end up get room time for something simply like talking in the vent or not having my shirt tucked in.

In here I'll do good for a lot of days straight, and staff might I'ma get this for you but they never do. And they say "Oh, you been doing good, I'ma let you work," but I still never worked.

Or like my crime. I was in a stolo right, and I been to camp but I ran. Now I'm trying to get on EM but they ain't letting me. But I know people in here for robberies and gun charges, getting on EM.

And plus to add to this, it's my first time in the hall. But I just think my life has a lot of disappointments in it, because it's tellin' me life ain't fair and not to trust nobody or count on nobody, and just take care of myself and not worry about others.

-Dookie D

From The Beat: This is exactly the hardest part about being caught up in the system. Suddenly you are totally dependent on other people for everything. They control your actions, your food, your immediate future, everything. But soon you'll be out, and you'll have more control over a lot of things in your life. If you can hang on till then, and stay out of stolo-type situations, you might find new things to make you happy, instead of all these constant disappointments. Good luck, and keep your head up!!!



Prove Them Wrong – In A Good Way

When I get disappointed it matters about what I'm disappointed about, but if someone doubts me I and I get disappointed it betters me cause I'm gone prove them wrong -- in a good way. I'm gonna get my money and smile in my face.

And once I do that, it make me feel better, 'cause of what they was doubting me about, I proved them wrong. So my disappointment changes.

-Marcus

From The Beat: You've been struggling with a lot of disappointment -- but it's that line "a smile in my face" that gives us the most hope. You have a strong positive spirit, full of hope and the desire for better, and you've always been honest with The Beat about where you were at, even when you were in a dark place. Whatever happens, know that you have earned our deepest respect.

I Wanna Go Home

Man I wanna go home. I wanna go home so bad. I can't take this type of stuff no more. I learned my lesson from being in here. I wanna go home so bad.

If the court gave me another chance, then I'd be where I won't mess up, 'cause I ain't tryna cum back. Right when I get out I'ma finish whatever the court give me, and then I'm Charlie.

Then I ain't comin' back. Well I ain't go say I'm not, but I'ma try.

-Stefan

From The Beat: We hope you get that chance to go home. But then at the end it sounds like you doubt yourself a little bit, like you're afraid that you might come back. What are you worried about? What are the biggest mistakes you're afraid of making? And is there a staff or advisor you could talk to here about your worries?

Me and My Brother

The memory that haunts me all the time is when my brother almost died. I take care of my brother because he can't walk. I help him out every day. I love him very much but sometimes I do mistreat him but sometime he deserves it.

He's just so hateful all the time. I think it's just because he can't walk and it bothers him. But he keeps his feelings to himself like me but I can tell when some thing bothers him or he's sad, because I'm the same way about my feelings as he is.

If My Pet Could Talk

My pet would tell stories about me stealing smoking and drinking and some good stories about helping my brother, but the rest of the stories are about me smoking and drinking at home and trying to hide it before anybody gets home.

- Johnny

From The Beat: We put your pieces together because it was like each one told a different side of what it's like to be you: The love you feel for your family, the responsibility of taking care of your brother while he is suffering, the disappointments you feel in yourself, and mostly, how much heart you have. You have an incredible life story, based on what we're reading here, and also a lot of stress bottled up. If you ever wanted to write us some of your life story for The Beat (maybe starting with how your grandparents came to take care of you), we would be proud to print it.

A Memory That Sill Haunts Me

One day when my uncle got shot.

Me and my mom was watching a movie when we heard gun shots. I ran outside and I seen my uncle in the middle of the street. I looked at the people that shot him, and then they sped off and my uncle got shot five times in the stomach, six in the back, and six in the rib cage.

He died when he got to the hospital and then I called my homies and we went to go look for them ninjas that killed my uncle.

My uncle died during a dice game he was only 21 years old. RIP Unk-T

-Nephew

From The Beat: The newspapers report these stories as statistic, but you know firsthand just how many tears lie behind the stories. We're so sorry for your loss. Did your life change a lot after your uncle died? Did it have a big effect on you?

My Dreams

My dream is to be a mom
Holding my baby close telling
Then that everything is gonna
Be okay.

Having that special bond
Knowing their likes and dislikes
Knowing their crushes and rivals
Being there, in the darkest times
Always there to support no matter what.

My dream is to be a model
Standing on the spotlight
Having my picture taken
And put in magazines
Traveling around the world
And being on the scene
Constructive and destructive criticism. I can handle it.
My dream to be....

-Sweetie

From The Beat: It's great to hear you speaking on having dreams -- motherhood, a career. Now tell us what steps you'd need to take to make these dreams come true? Modeling is high risk, so we'd say that while you're pursuing that ambition, you also go to college, because then you can also find another career option. We'd love to see you shine, but your Beat writing shows such a talented and beautiful person on the INSIDE that we'd love to see you in a job that uses all that inner beauty!

Love Struck

What's up beat It's your homie Smokey, coming to you from these maximum security walls.

Well it's my first month done of my eight months. Seven more to go till I can walk away from all this drama and never turn back. Something happened, see I was with this female for some time and I fell in love with her after two days. It was the same thing with her.

Well I messed that up.

See I was going to go to L A for a while so my homies had a party for me. I killed a fifth of Hennessy and we had three thirty-two packs of Budweiser, so I passed out for about five minutes, and see there was hella females and my homies...Well, anyways, I woke up and my patna told me that there was some female in a car looking for me.

So I poked my head out the door and saw that it was Priscilla, so I went up to the car and tried to kiss her. Then she slapped me and started crying and left. I went back in the house, looked in the mirror and I had a hickey on my neck.

The whole point of this, Beat, is if you have something in your life that's worth it, do everything you can to keep it. I just got back in contact wit' her but it's hard to talk to each other, 'cause of what I did.

The first time I saw her and looked her in these beautiful honey brown eyes I was love struck. And that ain't gon' change. I love her, but it's gonna take a minute to get what we had before.

But I'm going to do everything in my power to get her love back in my life. Priscilla, aka Smiles, I love you and I always will you have my heart and soul. The day I get out you'll be the first person I see. Smile for me.

-Allen

From The Beat: They say true love conquers all, and so maybe in this case, true love will help heal the wounds of betrayal. But straight up, it sounds like the real enemy in this case was that Fifth of Hennessey. Here's the thing about drinking like that. A. it's illegal, and you already know how messed up things are on the wrong side of the law B. it's poisonous, you can die from that, straight up. C. And here's the part you already know - it turns you into a person you're not. If you'd been sober, would you have cheated on this girl?

Disappointment Depends

I don't always fell the same when someone disappoints me. It depends who it is that disappointed me. Like if my broad disappoints me I do something to make her hella mad. If one of my lil ninjaz disappoints me I'll beat they ass or try to teach them something.

When my Mama disappoints me I don't come home for some days. And when I disappoint myself I try to take it out on some one else or sometimes blame it on someone else.

-Marley

From The Beat: Man, doesn't that just lead to more disappointment? It sounds like some of these ways of dealing might make it all even worse. Like, have you ever tried a different strategy - like talking to your girl about how you feel, or talking to your mom?

I've Disappointed A Lot of People

I've disappointed a lot of people in my family.

My dad and moms always told me to go to school, do good, and stay out of trouble, but it's like it went in one ear and came out the other. I love my parents very much and they love me the same. The biggest disappointment is when I came to Juvy. I never thought I would come but I did. I'm disappointed because I disappointed my parents. They don't deserve this suffering and I pray to God and thank Him that they are both with me. But I pray to God to forgive all my sins and the people that I've disappointed.

I also disappointed my grandfather he told me to promise him to be good but I didn't. I love them and I hope they forgive me.

I don't get mad but it makes me try harder to better myself and when I go to sleep I ask God to make me go the right way and to get all my prayers to my parents. Every day I tell them goodnight, good morning, how they doing, to all my family members one by one, because they miss me and want me home.

So I ask God to forgive my disappointments to all my family members.

-Martin

From The Beat: Another heartfelt piece, Martin. When you look back on the things you've done, do you have an idea why? Do you think you will be tempted to repeat the same mistakes, or do you have another plan. It sounds like the person you disappointed the most is yourself, which means that you have high expectations for yourself. Tell us what they are and what you plan for the future!

SAN FRANCISCO COUNTY

My Pet

'S'up Beat? It's Marveezy here to talk about my pet cat. Damn, if my cat could talk, he would have a lot to say. He would probably talk about the good times we had. Like when he would come to me when I was watching TV and we would chill. Or when I come home he would meow a lot to say wassup.

My cat is hella chill and he is one of a kind. He might even talk about the one time I hot boxed in my room and kept blowing smoke in his face. Ha ha. He was over passed out in the corner. Good times. A'ight, Beat. It's time to go. Adios.

-Marv

From The Beat: We love cats, too. But don't you think you were taking a big chance by getting your cat high? A cat's brain is the size of a walnut. Sometimes you have to use your bigger brain to think, and not just to amuse yourself. Who's taking care of your cat now? What's his name?

You better have a plan or you better expect to come back.

Better Have A Plan For Your Life

What's up wit' The Beat and everybody incarcerated? How's everybody doing? I know everybody thinking when is the day they going to get out, but first you got to think about what are you gonna do when you get out? You better have a plan or you better expect to come back. You think about it. This is G Enano, doing time at the Ranch, and I'm out. Holla at ya later.

-G Enano

From The Beat: Good advice. What's your plan for how to manage your life in a new direction when you're free again? What do you want to achieve and/or give up, and how will you do it?

My Grandmother

My grandmother means a lot to me. She the one who took care of me. I was nine years old. When she passed away, my real mom came and got me. That time I was nine about to turn ten.

I moved with my mom to her side of family, because my mom and dad are separated. This happened in Samoa. My mom paid all of our tickets so we could come to the United States. We stayed with my mom side of the family. Me and my mom and brother and sister stayed with my mom's sister until we found our own place.

-Ufa Otou

From The Beat: We wish you had spent a little more time telling us about your grandmother. How much can you remember about her? What do you miss the most about her? If she could talk to you right now, what do you think she would tell you? Would you listen?

Sold Out Game

This game is sold out by the weak ninjas that punked out,

So you better know well when to bust your next sell,
'Cause you don't know if the next man is gone tell
An' everything might end up in a crime scene full of shells

An' with you in an 8x10 cell

It's gone be messed up when you only enjoyment its
gone be your mail

You gone cry when you hear that there is no bail,
So I rather go out like a six an' 60 to hell.

-Lil' Lazysm

From The Beat: You can't be sold out unless you do something to be sold out for. Be careful what you wish for. It's easy to say you'd rather go to hell, but if you get there, there's no way to return...

Kidnapped

I got kidnapped by the feds

Sleepin' on metal beds

Wearin' colorless clothes

In a brotherless world

Ranch food

Got me wantin' to hurl

Gotta lock my shhh

Or I'ma get hit

An' be the sleeper

Hit by the creeper

Who's the leader leadin' the set

More or less a game of chess

Wit' ninjas from the east

An' ninjas form the west

Everybody thinkin' they the best

Wit' the brains an' muscle

Gotta stay on hustle

Stuck watchin' guys

Doin' shhh's a lil' pricy

Get caught

An' it'll turn icy

Like a kid vs. Tyson

Can't even get a license

So he can't even fight him

So what's the point?

Just gunna lose a joint

Just stay down an' smile

While they clown

An' when they around

Don't ever frown

So they see

I can't be broke

Even durin'

A heat stroke

Let 'em see

That I need

A smoke

I need some coke

An' I'm talkin' 'bout the soda

Show the popo

They just a wannabee Yoda

-Lil' Hedge Hog

From The Beat: It's really unfortunate, that in such a beautiful natural setting, you still have to watch your back, lock up your stuff, front all the time, and be careful not to show any emotion. But you should know that young men who get back from prison tell The Beat that they've had to spend years never letting go in any way, and when they're free again, they really have a hard time adjusting to being able to make their own decisions, and to allow themselves to feel anything. Your poem is very insightful about how tricky it can be, when you're incarcerated, to be yourself.

My Words, If You Understand

Jesus...

Jesus...

My pain is his pain

His pain is my pain

If you wanna understand my thoughts

Then try to rearrange

My mind frame

Throwing jabs at the situation

With mind games

So just take aim

But don't squeeze

'Cause you need

To hear what I say

'Cause I say what you need

I am spitting real shhh

My words a make

Ya ears bleed

That's why

When I cry

My tears bleed

Running from death

While bullets trying to pierce me

Still walking through life fiercely

Can't wait to get to heaven

'Cause somehow

I don't know

Dark Side's dying

Momma still crying

This pain that I am feeling

That these demons installed in me

Ya, when I get out

I know

Them guns

Gone be calling me

Demons still following me

I am still trying

To walk tall

They just waiting for your man

To sleep and fall

Got young men fighting for oil

My own brothers

Banging they soil

And yet guns change our faith

So we meet with anger

And put a mask on our face

Just kill your own brother

And it be a clean slate

These politicians acting fake

Like how these fat kids love cake

They selling us dreams

It's like we in a sound-proof room

But we can't hear ourselves scream

Get shot

Now you on the murder rate

Congratulations, you made the team

They killed our black leaders

With that infrared beam

But I am just saying

Are you just listening?

Need to put the pieces together

That we've been missing

We gifted

Just use your mind

Damn, Dark Side

-Dark Side

From The Beat: Your words make our hearts bleed. We can feel the agony your demons are causing you. Who are the demons who are calling you? What do they want? What happens if you ignore them? How can you silence the whisper of guns trying to lure you to pick them up? Why does killing your own brother provide you with a clean slate? Why doesn't killing anyone just cause the demons to shriek louder, relentlessly, in your head?

My First Dead Body

Ey, what's up Beat? This ya boy Bizz. A moment that continues to haunt to this day is when ma big bru Cell got killed and his body was left in the same spot for hours where he died. They finally came and picked his body up at like one something in the morning.

Sometimes I think of that day when his body just sat on the ground lifeless. I'm trying to get over that horrible memory because that's the first time I seen a dead body up close in my life. It will take some time to get over with but I will.

-Bizz

From The Beat: This is a terrible memory to live with, and we're sorry you had to experience it. We're even sorrier that Cell was killed and his body treated with such disrespect. Why is life so cheap here? What has happened to the religious values we say we believe in? Has this event and the memory of it forced you to think about yourself and the world in any different ways?

Disappointment

I feel disappointed when I go to court and I don't get out. But I know I'm going to get out someday. It's really nothing to this ninja. But anyways, I've been in here today and my PO be playin' wit' me. Hopefully I'm going to be out and back to da block I go.

-Xavier

From The Beat: So, if having to answer to a bunch of strangers who tell you when to go to the bathroom is "really nothing," when you go back to the same things that brought you here before, it won't be anything to you when you are put back in the box, right?

Men Need To Stop Coming Here

Beat, let me tell you something about something that haunts me still — coming to this place call YGC. Now they got a new name for it, JJC.

Man, since I came in here I just been coming back for stupid stuff and stuff that I could had just kept moving. Let me tell you I think and think why did I do this, and now it's haunting me all through my life.

Now I'm done. I'm ready to turn my life around and be the man I was raised to be since I was born. All boys and men need to step coming to this place.

-Lil' Jer-lala

From The Beat: If you really make the choice to turn your life around and never come back here (whatever they call it), we think you will start to build a future you can be proud of. You say you keep coming here for stupid stuff, but to tell you the truth, we've never heard any reasons for coming here that could be described in any other way. Time to get smart!

Time To Get My Time Done

What's s'up wit da Beat? Man, dis ya boy Ryhda. Ain't nothin' new over here, same shhh different day. I was supposed to be gone, but they messed up my paper work so they gotta re-do my shhh, ya dig.

Anyways, I get to see my fam this Friday come up, ya feel me. After dis, I won't be able to see them for another six months. But yeah, dese days seem to be goin' slower each day that passes by. I can't wait till I get dis time done wit'.

My mentor got a job waitin' fo' me ready ta try new things, But gotta go player till next time.

-Jr. Ryhda

From The Beat: We hope you had a good family visit. But we hope even more that you use the time you have to away from them to give yourself more skills and preparation for life on the outs. Having a job waiting for you is great. Getting your education is even greater, because it lasts your entire life. Good luck.

He Died In Silence

What's good with The Beat? I want to tell y'all a memory that haunts me every day. That I saw one of my big homies die. That mess me up seeing him there like that 'cause he just on the ground not saying shhh. That a memory that haunts me.

-Ace Boogie

From The Beat: This is a haunting memory we wish you didn't have. Are there ways you can avoid the kind of lifestyle that leads to haunting memories like this?

A Near-Fatal Car Crash

A memory that still haunts me is when I heard that my brother and my friend had got into a car accident and that the car had wrapped around a tree. I received the call when I was at my girl's house. I went to the site where the wreck took place, and the car was devoured, I mean just tore apart.

I thought my brother died in that accident and I went to the hospital and seen him. I heard he was going to be all right, but he was just going to have a cast. But still till this day it haunts me to think what if it would have been worse.

-G

From The Beat: Were glad your brother was only hurt and not killed. Was he wearing his seat belt? We read about so many young people who are either killed or permanently disabled because they weren't wearing their seatbelts, and we just can't figure out why. What about you? Did this make you drive more carefully, choose whom to ride with, or put on that seat belt?

Moms Heals Me With A Smile

What's good Beat? Not much here, just living this week-ass JJC life. Anyways, I'm gonna tell you guys a lil' 'bout the one person who heals me with a smile, my mama.

My mom's the one person I can't live without. She's taught me so much through my lifetime. I love my mama. If there is one person that I had to be with, it would be my mom. Basically my mom is one of the most important people in my life.

-Muslim Warrior

From The Beat: It must be very reassuring to have your mother so much a part of your life, and someone you love so much. If you think you can't live without her, just think how she is coping without you! When you're out of this situation, find a way to stay with her where you belong and where both of you want you to be.

An Elder

A elder that's special for me is my big homie Flaco. He's special to me 'cause he always give me good advice, and he's always looking after my family when I'm not there.

I remember when I first met the homies. He was the only one who show me love. All the other homies just looked at me like if I didn't know shhh, but Flaco was the only one that knew what's up. Later on dat year, me and Flaco were always together. He saw how I got down and showed me more love. He knew I had love for da 'hood.

Now all I do in my room is wish I went back to Los Angeles with Flaco. He still keeps contact with me. He writes to me still. He's been there for my way more times, but I ain't got enough time to tell you.

-Miguel

From The Beat: You've told us a lot in this piece, Miguel. We can understand why you love Flaco because he schooled you and still writes you (even though we wish he had taught you how to stay out of the system...). But we find it harder to understand your loyalty to a 'hood that isn't doing your time, isn't putting money in your pockets, and isn't here visiting you. What's the difference between loyalty and love for an individual and loyalty and love for a group?

Why?

Why play the game you do
 Why say I love you
 Is it the same lines you always use
 Why make the girl that used to love you a foo'
 Why lie and not be a man about it
 Why cheat on her with a female from the 'hood
 Did you think she wouldn't find out about it
 Why play the games you do
 Your game is lame
 Why you can't stand up to your responsibilities
 You lost your friend and loved one
 So check this out, step your game up
 And be real 'cause you fooling yourself for real
 Are you living a lie.

-Lucero

From The Beat: We don't know who you are addressing this tight poem to, but it sounds like whoever it is, in the end, is just cheating himself. He's still just a boy waiting to grow up.

Elder In My Life

An elder in my life is my mother. My mother is my role model. She is for granted! Even though I know I've messed up a lot, she is my best friend! She is my real homie ride to die! She's the one I can trust, talk to, love!

I love my beautiful mother. She and my son is my all. She's everything to me! My mother is more than my mother. I love you beautiful mother!!

-Monstrita

From The Beat: You're lucky to have someone so strong and loving on your side. Why aren't you home with her where you belong, and where she wants you? She doesn't want you to ride or die. She wants you to stay and live.

Giving Away My Freedom... Again

What's up Beat? This be the real Vago... Ha ha ha. Naw, but I'm talk about "disappointment." I was disappointed when I came back to the halls. I told myself I was never going to come back. That was two years ago.

Now I been here six months and going to Bruno the end of next month. After that I might go to the pen the court is talking about. So that got me very disappointed of myself because I should've stay out but I failed again.

So when I get out, I have to start all over again and nothing can stop me because I can't stop and won't stop. Y'all dig. I'm out.

-Vago

From The Beat: When you told yourself two years ago that you were never coming back, did you have a plan to make that promise come true, or was it just a child's empty? Here, you proudly state that when you get out (of prison?), you plan to go right back to what keeps putting you under the control of people who tell you when you can pee! The only thing that lets you continue to believe that they can't stop you is your inability to see that $a + b = c$! You can be stopped! In California, there are more than 27,000 prisoners doing life, more than 3,000 doing Life WITHOUT Parole, and more than 600 condemned to death! But maybe you're smarter than all of them...

An elder in life

The elder in my life is my mom. Every time I have a problem, she is there to listen to me and advise me on positive and what I can do. I tell her my secrets and everything. I love her. She like my friend and I could open up to her anytime. She strong and beautiful too.

-Lucero

From The Beat: Do you really know how lucky you are to have a mom like this in your corner? What do you think you owe her? Can you give her what she wants from and for you — which is for you to live a decent life without risking your safety or your freedom?

Run Tell Dat

-Beam

From The Beat: Of course we didn't publish this piece. Threatening others totally disrespects what The Beat offers you. Plus, if you act out these threats, it's like a prescription for a lot more years of being fed up!

A Memory That Still Haunts Me

What's up wit The Beat? This yo' boi Na-Na Holly writin' about when me an' the goons was on Castro on Halloween. We got into it wit' some of our rivals, an' it got real spunky. We got into a big shoot out, an bra got hit. That still comes to haunt me. The memory is still in my head seeing the homie almost bleeding to death!

RIP to tha homie D-Tro. Yo thug, miss you. They try to ride, but most of them seem to die. But that's what comes back to haunt me all the time thinkin' about tha homie D-Tro.

Peace out Beat. See you when ah see you.

-Na-Na Holly

From The Beat: If you got into a shootout on in the Castro on Halloween, you put a whole lot of people's lives at risk. Do you think your little games (which is how we think of boys playing with guns) are worth more than all the lives of those who come out for Halloween? Because of guns and knives in the Castro, this year the city completely closed the place down. Y'all ruined it for everyone. No wonder it haunts you!

Bad Memory

One day, somebody called me talking about, my boo thang got shot in the head, and he died. But before he got shot, we broke up over some stupid stuff.

So one day I am in 20/20 buying something. And I am with my new boo thang. And somebody was touching my shoulder. So I turn around and I start screaming and backing up about to run out of the store. But I manage to get some word out of my mouth, and said I thought you were dead.

-Tashelle

From The Beat: This is a haunting story for sure. What happened? We wish you had put in more details to explain why someone told you he was dead but he was actually alive. What happened after you spoke?

My Special Elder

My great-grandmother is special in my life. She has been there for me ever since I was born. She really is my backbone. She's been in this world for over 70 years. She comes up here to see me. She's a wise woman and just wants the best for me. She cares a lot about me and want me to be a role model for my cousins.

-CeCe

From The Beat: If you already know what this wonderful woman wants for you and from you, why haven't you given it to her? You can't be a role model for anyone as long as you're doing the things that lead you from her to here. Think of how you can give her what she wants, and go out and do it!

Cats And Birds Would Catch Criminals

If my cat can talk, she would tell about the boys that I brought in my house, and the time I took my dad money and I spent it all on weed. The consequences was stay in my house and no lunch money and no phone calls. I think it would be great 'cause cat and birds would be able to solve crimes 'cause they be out late at night and people would be gettin' caught.

-Lil' Cedes

From The Beat: What kind of conversations would you be having with your cat if she could talk?

You Say It's Over

You say It's over, but It's not true
Looking in yo' eyes of beauty, I still see you love me too
It's no reason to hide... Daddy still here for you
Just take my hand and my word, and I can assure guide
you through

I know it's hard, you stressing an' all
But keep ya head up 'cause ya blessing is callin'
And know I forgive you fo' all da disregarding name
calling,

But all I can say is trust these precious words I'm
sending to you

And know Jay Pitt gon leave it all up to you
'Cause you say it's over, but I know it's not true!

-Jay Pitt

From The Beat: We hope you're right, and that this wonderful love is not over. Being "here" for her is not enough. You must be there for her. And you must stay there for her.

Untitled

If my brain can talk
What wouldn't it say
Damn, it would say so much shhh!
What wouldn't my brain do
Sometimes it feels like
It wants to go crazy
Damn, it wants to blow up
It would just leave you in shock!
Just by the things it wants to do
If my thoughts can just explode!

-Monstrita

From The Beat: Well, of course your brain can talk. It talks every time you put pencil to paper. In fact, we wish you would let your thoughts explode all over these pages!

They Lyin' To Me

What's good with The Beat? This ya boi J.R. me just chillin', maintain' getting through this shhh 'cause I'm tired of group homes lyin' to me, tellin' me they gonna accept me but when it come to the court date, they decline me. But t I guess what comes around goes around, you dig.

-J.R.

From The Beat: Why do you think the group homes reject you? We don't know what you mean when you quote that old saying about what comes around goes around. Could you explain?

A Memory That Still Haunts Me

I'm in here and I can't protect my family, my lil' sister, nobody. And that scares the shhh out of me, fa real. But I ain't tripping 'cause I'm 'bout to be out in a minute, fa sho, fa sho. All the time I pray for my family 'cause I know what I'm in on the outs.

It ain't no game out in the streets, so I gotta be ready when I get out so every day I wake up and say my prayer and go like this. I blew up before I grew up, got introduced to the game. Now I'm at ninja's heads like crew cut suit up and lace ya boots up. It's war time.

-Da Futon

From The Beat: We're not sure if you'll even recognize this piece as yours because we had to take so much out of it. The Beat is a place to teach, not to boast about your set or your weapons or what you're going to do to whom. We also took out the parts that might incriminate you and put you deeper into the hole you're digging for yourself. You may think you know where your "game" is leading, but we think your moving forward with blinders on your eyes, and that if you're not careful, the box you're living in now will seem like the Hilton Hotel when you arrive at the next stop the system has waiting for you. Of course, you can do what you want to do, but that doesn't mean it's appropriate for The Beat...

A Memory That Haunts Me

A memory that haunts me is that I feel the death of my boyfriend. His death is my fault. He had died October 2nd 2007, and the bullets wasn't for him. To tell you the truth, they was actually for me, but he threw me out the way. I guess when he turned around an' ran, he got hit three times. I guess he didn't recognize it until he was in my mom backyard.

I feel if I look a little bit harder than what I did I think I could have found him an' he would still be alive. I feel it's all my fault. Since that happened, it been haunting me.

-Brittany

From The Beat: Whether those bullets were meant for you or not, you can't blame yourself for his death. The real lesson you should draw from this terrible event is that certain lifestyles lead to early death far too often. We hope you never put yourself in this position again.

What Still Haunts Me

The thing that haunts me is my grandmother when she died on me. I mean, she took care of me since I was knee high. Sometimes I still cry about that till this day. She was like a mom to me because I had no mom. My dad was there, but he wasn't, so my uncle was there and he took care of me. He taught me about everything I know — how to play football, basketball, and a whole lot lo other stuff.

-Allen

From The Beat: We're sorry you lost your grandmother. We know how the loss of a loved one can hurt for a long, long time. But you are lucky that you had her for as long as you did. If she could talk to you right now about your situation, what would she tell you?

My son

My son
J'Haun

He is special to me
He was my blessing from God
I love him so much
I will do anything for him
He's my life, he's my soul
He's the only one I got
Besides my mother I love
I love him, I love him... yes, me
I love him
J'Haun

-Balencia

From The Beat: We can tell how much you love him through this poem. But now you have to give him the love he deserves not just by getting out of here (that will happen), but by staying out of here. It's time to put him and his needs ahead of you and yours.

A Memory That Haunts Me

What's up with The Beat, man? It's ya boy Novo F. The biggest memory that haunts me is getting shot. It's a lot of way I could've prevented it, but it too late. Ain't no use of crying over spilt milk. I just wish I could've stayed in school and been a good little kid like I was. Getting shot traumatized me, but it did open my eyes and made me look at life different. It made me a beast. I'm not proud of that but somebody got to prey on the weak.

-Novo

From The Beat: Are you saying that getting shot made you want to prey on the weak? That's what bullies do. It's not a sign of strength, but of weakness. If that's what you do, you're right not to be proud of yourself. Are your eyes really opened? Would things look different if that shot had severed your spine and put you in a wheelchair for the rest of your life? Then you'd be the one others preyed on...

Pops

My pops is my role model because he been experienced for years, and he can teach me something because he been through things I haven't been through. He can teach me old things, He been there, done that, and he's my dad. So off top, he my role model, from selling to popping thangs, pops can tell me all about it. Dat's why I got game the way I do, ya dig.

Pops always there for me so I can talk to pops about anything from stacking green, quarter kicks of cream, and leaving a mark face on the front of a white tee. I from San Francisco and big pops is from Berkeley. Big pops gone go bad if a fool try to mark me. He tell me watch my moves.

-Monyea

From The Beat: All that game your pops has spit in your direction hasn't kept you from handing away your freedom. Maybe he's been there done that, too, but that doesn't mean you have to be here and do this. Or does it?

Disappointment

Disappointment is a feeling we possess when our freedom is crushed

Being watched on the toilet seat as our belongings are flushed

Sitting in court, nervously, anxiety kicking in

When will court perish? When will it begin?

Time is moving so slow, chin hairs are starting to sprout

When will life reschedule? When am I getting out?

I'm trying to understand what the judge is saying

I'm hoping the last words of court is not the word "Detained"

Patiently I sit and wait, learning mistakes itself
Wishing to come home to my clothes sitting on the shelf
I'm still trippin' off of jail and how I'm in it

I love my thugs, forget da world, the sky's the limit!

-Guttah

From The Beat: Have you ever heard the expression, "You can't have your cake and eat it too?" That's what you want to do. You want to damn the rules society insists you live by, but you also want to go home to your own clothes, your own room. If you know what caused you to hand over your freedom to the jailer, what makes you think doing the same thing won't end in the same way? It's you who is flushing your life down the toilet!

If I Could Talk To Anybody

What it do Beat? It's ya boy Bully Bub holdin' down for the block, ya dig. But if t could talk to anybody I would talk to ma cousin Frank Nitty. I would ask him how does it feel in Paradise. I would ask him if he could, would he come back. But I'm out. Holla at ya boy.

-Gully Bub

From The Beat: Would it change anything about you if Frank Nitty answered you by saying, "This ain't Paradise! It's Hell! Stop doing what you're doing, and treasure your life!"

Disappointing The Ones That Love Me The Most

What up, Beat? This ya boi Lil' Bra, and I want to let y'all know that being in here is a big disappointment. Being away from the ones that love me or the ones I love, such as my friends and family. That's the ones who love me the most.

-Lil' Bra

From The Beat: You should be at the top of the list of those who love you the most. When you truly love yourself, and the incredible gift of freedom you've been given, you won't risk giving it all up for silliness.

What On My Mind

Before I came downstairs from my room to participate in The Beat Within, I was thinking about my life and the decisions I've made. I was thinking about the good times I've had and the bad times. I was thinking about how did I end up in here. I'm tired of living a fast life and I'm ready to do right now. I want to be successful and have a family.

-Tercha'

From The Beat: Good for you, Tercha'. Some people have to be quite old before they realize that this life doesn't lead anywhere, and that slowing down and taking it one step at a time is the way to reach your goals. Go for it!

If My Pet Can Talk

If my pet can talk, I think my cat would cuss me out. I used to swing it by the tail and throw it down the stairs. If my cat Jada could speak, I think it would say that I have problems and I'm mean and I need help. The opinions she might have is to say is that someone need to really talk to me and get some sense in my head 'cause I be doing cruel things to her on purpose.

-Brittany

From The Beat: Why? What pleasure do you get out of torturing something that has no power to protect itself? Do you feel like Jada is something you can control, even if you can't control yourself or others? If you know your cat would tell you that you need to get help, that you need to talk to someone about this, then you don't have to wait for Jada to talk. You already know. Now it's time to act.

An Elder

Man, my elder is my big homie from the... I don't want to say his name because I don't know where this paper get to. But he put me on with everything I know, from loading guns to letting them off. Man, my ninja showed me how to get at old women and taking all their money. Man, that's my ninja for real. He messes with me for real, even though I'm a young ninja because this shhh right here is nothing, this YGC shhh.

My ninja be telling how the pen is because this ninjas is clowns, funny-ass ninjas for real, I don't see how these clowns be BSing, coming here for little. I know I'm stupid too, but the people that come in and out of here just clowns, and I'm cool. I keep my head up. Yeah, that's my bra for real man. God, man, that for real the one I love and look up to because I'm trying to learn his word, for real, right now man. So yeah, that's who I look up to.

-James

From The Beat: So, your being schooled by someone whose lessons have led you to give your freedom up to a bunch of strangers and allow them to put you in a cage with a bunch of clowns? It doesn't sound like you've got a very good teacher, to us. When he tells you about the pen, does he also tell you that if you keep taking money from old women that's where you'll end up? Then you can be the OG reaching out from behind bars to the next youngster like you coming up... and wishing you were out there with him.

A Memory That Still Haunts Me

What it do wit' da Beat? It's ya boy Gully Bub keep it lit for da block, ya dig! The reason I picked this one 'cause it caught my attention. A memory that haunts me to dis day is watchin' ma one homie die in ma face. I think about that every day an' look like, "Damn, that could have been me." And also I think 'bout how moms taking it. That shhh really hurt a ninja. But I'm out, holla at ya boy.

-Gully Bub

From The Beat: We can understand how the memory of that death would haunt you. Does it change anything about how you want to live your life?

Disappointment

When I'm disappointed, I mean I'm speak up, because that's just how I am, fa real. And if the other person gets offended, that's on them because I'm not just goin' let you disrespect me because then he just goin' go around tellin' ninjas that I'm a sucka. If I'm around someone and I hear someone tryna play him, I'ma tell him ta speak up 'cause if you don't, he gon' keep disrespectin' him.

-Master Rhodes

From The Beat: We're not sure you've given much on the subject of disappointment. When do you feel disappointed? (That's not the same as when you feel disrespected.) Do you ever disappoint yourself? Are you disappointed because you've done something that allowed the system to take your freedom?

Always Lockin' Us Up

Man, every time I turn around, one of da homies in jail or I'm in jail. Man, I'm comin' back fa new cases. I be seeing ma big homie, Bundy, and sometime I think, "Do I want to be like that?" Man, we stay in jail, 'cause da yo's know what we could do. We really don't know how to keep it cool. Dat's why we stay in dis hellhole.

-Quan

From The Beat: It must be terrible to give up so much of your time to live under the control of strangers. But when you ask yourself if you want to be like another homie who you see in jail most of the time, you're acknowledging that you have the power. Are "they" putting you in jail, or are you?

My Family

My special elder is my mom, because my mom is always there for me when I needed her. When I get in trouble, my mom try her best to get me out the bad situation. My mom raised me on her own since I was born. My mom is always strict about me going to school every day, because school is the most important thing to her. That's why my mom is my special elder.

-Thomas

From The Beat: You're so lucky to have a mother who cares so much for you — and she's so lucky to have a son who appreciates her. Were you going to school every day like she told you? We hope so, because she's right, school is the most important thing you can do to avoid coming to places like this.

Bang, Bang...

-Mr. President

From The Beat: We're leaving your title but taking out your entire piece because we won't let you disrespect us by ignoring every one of the things you know we won't publish. If you want to write this kind of childish bs, make your own magazine!

I Want To Be Something

When I get out I want a better life. I don't want to have to come back up here. I want to go far in life. I don't want to just stay in San Francisco all my life. I want to graduate and better my life. I want to get out these streets an' stop all this beefin' because I don't want to be seventeen or eighteen an' die in these streets over who block is who an' something I did ten years ago. Ninja need to let that shhh go an' open they eyes and see what in front of them. Ninja need to step they game up.

-Edward

From The Beat: We like it when you concentrate on what you want to accomplish, and forget what the next guy needs to do. Stay focused on your goals, and you will succeed.

Haunting Memory

Well, when I get out of here, this is goin' haunt me because I'm just goin' think about getting' caught and where I'm go when I do get caught.

-Master Rhodes

From The Beat: So, you're already thinking about getting out and going back to the same old ways leading to getting caught again? If this place haunts you, why not stop doing the things that lead you here?

Me An' Bra

What's poppin' wit' The Beat? This yo' ninja Anto up in "super max." Ha ha...

My topic about me an' bra. It ain't no need to say names! Man, I miss my freedom hell a much. Me an' my bra just chillin' in the 'hood getting tucked, or posted on the G, or maybe the dyno! Me an' bra go back like flats on a cam bam. What you ninjas know about riding around in a stolen yota van? Just young hot ninjas trying to get by so we bust some guns, pull women and get high! Survival in the streets that's the hardest thing!

Love you Bra.

-Anto

From The Beat: So let's see if we understand — shooting guns, getting girls and getting high is what gets you by? Then why are you here where there are no guns, no girls (that you can touch), and nothing to get high with except your anger? It doesn't appear that your strategy is working for you. Did we miss something?

Two In One

Jack at Omega is my elder, like other father for real.

I don't take disappointment too well because I'm not too good at holding in my anger.

-Gloss

From The Beat: We put two of your topics together, because you only gave us one sentence on each. (We removed your final piece because we don't let you boast about your spot.) Next time, don't write on three topics because you can't say much of anything that way. Choose just one topic, and write a whole page on that one!

A Haunting Car Crash

A memory that still haunts me is when I got in a car crash and almost fell off the freeway. It was a nice day when we was on the freeway. We was going over 100 miles per hour in one lane when a car juke over and we juke over, too, then spun out and hit the wall. If we would've hit a little harder, we would've fell off. Nobody was injured. That was a good thing. That's something I will always remember.

-Mike da Great

From The Beat: Since we also drive on the freeways, we can only call driving at these speeds childish and irresponsible. Anyone who drives this fast should not have a license. (Did the driver have one?) Also, we're curious: were you so irresponsible that you were not wearing your seatbelts, or did you take that responsible step?

My Uncle Is My Elder Model

My uncle died, but when he was alive I could always talk to him about anything, even if it was about a female or drug dealing on da streets. When I talked to him, I felt comfortable because he would not treat me like I was a little kid. He treated me with the respect that I wanted to have, and that way he taught me more and I absorbed more that way.

-Master Rhodes

From The Beat: We're sorry you lost this elder influence in your life. It's always good to have someone you can talk openly with about what's going on in your life. What would he tell you about holding onto your freedom when you get out of here?

The Heat's Gettin' Low

I know what I feel
But I can't be real
The truth causes problems
And this time I can't solve 'em
I dunno what's gonna happen
But I know what could
You gettin' hurt and put down
Better knock on wood
There ain't guarantees
It might just happen
Just like when they rappin'
The beats just tappin'
They go wit' the flow
When the raps off beat
They know
'Cause they feel the heat gettin' low
What I mean is
You were why I tried
An' wanted as my life
But it was a fairy tale
Wit' no happy ending
Like everything else in my life
I'm jus' spendin'
Once I'm broke
Got nothin' else to be proud about
Like havin' no water
In a heavy drought
I'm chokin', watchin' things
Pass me by
Then you came
And made my pride
Gave me a chance
To turn things around
But time stopped again
Now I'm back
Where I was found
Once again
You tried to save me
But there's really no point
'Cause my life's too shaky
It's too unstable
So I pushed you away
Baby, I know I love you
But it's too risky to say
Better off finding someone else to save
Maybe he can make you smile all day
My life was always a lonely one
Guess it'll stay that way
'Til I'm done
Took 'bout ten months of pain an' tears
So what's another fifty years?
I'd rather tears rain from me
Than a drop off your eyes
Though I saw tears
From your eyes twice
More than I ever wanted to see
In my life
The choice was always yours
But I'd rather see you close the door
Than watch you hurt any more
But part of me wants you to leave it open
That's just what it's hopin'

-Lil' Hedge Hog

From The Beat: You sound like you feel overwhelmed right now, down at the Ranch, Lil' Hedge Hog. If you feel threatened somehow, or just need an adult you trust to talk to, can you make arrangements to get the help you need? And you, and almost all guys, can never know for sure what's in a young girl's heart, so instead of deciding this young lady is better off without you, why don't you let her have a say in what happens between you both? She may surprise you with her strength and how much she cares about you.

An Elder I Can Talk To

An elder I can talk to is my brother. He's real chill, and is a lot like me. That's why I can talk to him about anything. He lets me live my life, but gives me advice about it. I actually take his shhh to heart 'cause he doesn't force anything on me. I know he's real smart too, so it's good advice.

-Daddy Bars

From The Beat: You are lucky to have a brother who tries to guide you without trying to force you. But we have to ask: If he's advice is that good and you take it to heart, how did you end up handing away your freedom? What is his advice for when you get out of here?

Goin' Dumb

What it do with The Beat Within? Me shhh, AFB still doin' his thang, but I'll just drop another verse fa you mutts, ya heard:

[My mind so gone but my body still here, and my heart still normal 'cause a ninja never fear]

-Young Bundy

From The Beat: Sorry, Young Bundy, but the rap you've written is totally inappropriate! It violates all our standards, which — because you've been writing for us for a long time — you know very well! We have no problem putting your lines inside brackets, like you asked, but it's a two-way street. If you want us to accommodate your poem's style, then you have to accommodate us and our very simple rules. There's no doubt you have skills, YB, but if you can only put those skills to work in this very disrespectful way, then The Beat does not have to publish them!

Disappointment

My biggest disappointment is myself, nor for not staying in school but for not keeping ma game tight. I should not be in here right now. Me and my bra should be out there shining on ninjas right now. But you know dey can't keep Poon G or his squad down foreva, so when you see me in '08, know I got my shhh right and my game tight.

-Poon G

From the Beat: We truly hope you don't learn the really hard way how wrong you are about keeping you down forever. They most definitely can, if you give them the power to do it.

Through My Eyes

If you looked through my eyes
You would see things differently
You'll see life and death
Poor and poorer
Coke getting cooked to crack
Guns from 9s to 45s
And everything in between
Started stackin' ones
Now there's 100s
Fistfights turn to gunfights
Computer technicians smokin' crack
Lots of suckas takin' dirt naps
People walkin' with wires, wiretaps
And fags takin' pictures
Try not to be suspicious
And avoid any witness
If you speak, you will go missin'
But through my eyes
These aren't crimes
They're means of survival

-Birdman

From The Beat: This is your reality, and you have a good heart for your neighborhood, your life, and it's understandable that you defend it. You don't write how your environment has affected you and what your role has become in this life. You know the streets intimately, but what will happen to you when you're back in them and the drama may try to suck you back in? Much of what has seemed normal to you in the streets can also seriously sabotage your newfound liberty and life.

The Strength of Pain

What's up Beat, this is Santo about to be released in a couple of days.

I think pain is one of the most significant parts of your life because with pain once you suffer and go through a lot in life your personality change and you get more strong-minded and more wise through your life. And no matter what people tell you don't let them put you down on what they say because you are stronger because of what you have never been told.

-Santo

From The Beat: Many of us actually do not LEARN from pain. If we find ourselves in the same place, in the same pain, then we're just pretending. We know we've learned from pain when we make sustainable change in our lives.

I'm Not a Mathematician

In the last years I've caused a lot of pain
Me fighting people

My momma screamin' my name
When I see pain it reminds me of her cryin'
And her getting' mad 'cause I'm always lyin'
But I love my momma and she loves me too
Now I'm locked up and she knows what I'm going through

I write her letters, she visits me and accepts my calls
Sometimes I want to cry staring at my four walls
My relationship with my family has gone down hill
I get mad and go bad and they tell me to chill
I thought they wanted to run my life but they was keepin' it real

Now I sit still and think about all my problems
I'm not a mathematician but I figured out how to solve them

A lot of drama with my baby mamma she real crazy
She got mad how I didn't get mad when she tried to play me

I take care of my kids but I can't when I'm in here
But I have enough time to think and get things clear
Start off my new year with a lot of resolutions
Put out my old problems bring in new substitutions
And never put them on the bench again

Stay away from bad friends they're not changed men
Stay ahead of the game and do good 'till the end

-Da Kid

From The Beat: This is a powerful poem. You cover what's going on inside and outside of you. In what way does the pain that you cause others and the pain you experience motivate you to 'do good till the end'? Why is it that we can experience lots of pain and yet not learn from it?

The Dragon

As I soar through the misty clouds I feel higher than the tallest mountains.

As I peer down upon my city I feel like the greatest creature known to man.

I am not a bird, nor an airplane, nor a ghost.

I am that one who man has feared for many years beyond our time.

But not only has man feared me but respected and commemorated me. Mess with me and I'll make sure you and everyone you love meet your demise in a fiery death. I am D-mani the Dragon.

-D-mani

From The Beat: You apparently have an understanding of how dragons have been portrayed in American literature and story telling. Way to write a mysterious piece. Your creativity comes through in this piece.

Thank You To The Beat

What it do Beat! Well this be yo' boy Dreamcatcher. Well I've been writing to The Beat since '05, back in the max with David. He was the first person to open my eyes to The Beat and help me express myself in words and ways that I never imagined. So David thanks.

To Morghan and Elizabeth (my sweet and innocent friends) thanks for allowing me to be part of your class and express myself and for always giving advice on what to write even when you didn't know you were doing it, so once again thanks.

To the rest of The Beat staff, keep doing what you're doing 'cause for every ten kids in juvy you reach one, and I'm proud to be parts of the one's you reach. I'll end this with a "YES"!

Sincerely,

-Dreamcatcher

From The Beat: Your piece warms our hearts. The Beat staff all love their jobs—there's never a day that spending time with the young people at the all that is not meaningful. Thank you for letting us know about your experience with the Beat as you get ready to leave the Hall.

This Disappointment

I hate when I'm disappointed 'cause yo' boy get mad
When I can't express my feelings yo' boy go bad

I lose faith in people I really love
An when I get sad my results is drugs
So I try hard to control myself

And then I work hard on regaining my health
But people love to see the kid clown
And I love to smile but I always gotta frown
I get frustrated when I ride around town
I see people havin' fun livin' they life
While I'm stressed out livin' in strife

And I pray to God for better days
And I go to church tryin' to get God's praise
I need to learn a trade for a job to get appointed
I hate when I always get disappointed
I hope you understand how I feel
Stay away from drugs especially those pills

-Da Kid

From The Beat: Thank you for this piece—it is both meaningful and artistic. You paint a picture with your words. What can be done to help you express yourself?

What Will It Take?

In the past year so much has happened for me. Damn where do I begin. I've only been out three months this year. I got out January and I got locked up April. And I don't get out for another two months. But by the time I get out I'm going to have a plan to succeed. And one day I'll be in Mexico on a beach chillin' under the shade of the palm trees.

Also, this last year my brother Pete (RIP) passed away February 27. He was one of the best people I know and knew! He was always there for all the brothers. I miss him!

Last thing that I did was hurt my loved ones this whole year because I've been locked up! I still haven't said I'm sorry because I'm not, because I know I'll be locked up again.

Well Beat I'm checking out for now. Much love to all! Late.

-Outlaw

From The Beat: An entire year within the Hall, surely you don't think this it is a way to spend a year. But why do you say you're going to return to the Hall? Why do you think people know they will return, but can't prevent it? Wake up!

Snake/Scorpion

If I could be an animal, what I would be is half scorpion and half snake, these are my favorite animals. They are aggressive only when threatened or if you're too close to them.

Snakes are known to be devilry, snakes have an evilness inside.

Scorpions are desert animals. There are black and brown ones and they all have venomous bite, the bite can be deadly. They are really quick to attack.

Snakes and scorpions are really interesting animals. They do interesting things in the wild. Anacondas are the largest snakes in the world. They kill lots of other animals from the jungle to the desert. I've seen snakes on TV that have killed animals that were bigger than them, like for example a lion that got bit and was lucky to live but the lion's children that got bit died because they were too young.

My family in Mexico sometimes finds scorpions and snakes in their house. It would be crazy to be part human and snake/scorpion, it would be extraordinary and/or supernatural for something to exist like that.

-Rc

From The Beat: You know a lot about snakes and scorpions. In fact, you seem to use their real characteristics to make analogies to yourself. Do you see yourself as having evilness inside? WE know you do not bite if someone gets too close. Tell The Beat more, dig deeper...

Freedom

I close my eyes,
And look deep inside,
Ad start to realize,
My greater potential,
So I can rise,
And claim the prize,
Of freedom.

-Dreamcatcher

From The Beat: We have enjoyed reading your writing over the many months you have been here. Thank you for this final and beautiful piece! Best wishes for a successful life.

My Elder, My Sister

What up Beat, what's crackin'? As for me, nothing much just chillin'. Well my elder is my older sister. She'd my elder because, she has always been there for me. She taught me a lot. Every time I needed money, or a ride, or an alibi, she was always there for me. She always protected me when I was young and my mom was hella yelling at me or hitting me. She always took my side no matter what.

All right then Beat, that's all I got for you this week.

-R

From The Beat: You sound fortunate to have such a dedicated sister. Many of us can act like elders to others, but we overlook that opportunity. Seems like your sister has not missed an opportunity to be an elder. We can learn from her—don't miss a chance to make an important difference in someone else's life.

Disappointment

What's crackin' Beat? Well, I'm gonna lace you up real fast about our topic: Disappointment.

When I'm disappointed I tend to take it out on different objects. I hit them. It could be the wall, or mailboxes or whatever is around me. When I hit the wall it takes my mind off of what I'm disappointed about cause my hand starts to hurt. So when it hurts, I get mad cause my hand hurts a lot come to think of it. Hitting stuff when you're disappointed doesn't really help, so what's the point? I guess it just my reaction. That's it for this week.

-Droopy G

From The Beat: Wow, hitting mailboxes is a new one. We like how you came to the realization that hitting things doesn't really work to make you feel better, it often makes you feel worse – which sometimes can feel good in a bad sort of way. Maybe you should try taking some deep breaths – sometimes oxygen is all the brain needs to feel good.

Fish

As I swim around, I think to myself: Why did these weird big eyed things put me in this round container? Don't they understand that I'm supposed to swim free? And then when they talk, the sound comes really loud. These things think they're so smart. If they were smart, they would be able to live in water like us. Then they feed us this crap like that's the stuff we would normally eat. We get to just glide around in the water and just poop when we want and sleep when we want. The messed up part is that when these fools don't feed us like they are suppose to – we end up dying and humbly at the top. Then they flush down the toilet like that's a cool way to mourn us.

Another question is: Why do they let the small people take care of us? That's just so wrong. Life as a fish shouldn't be so rough.

-Young Fish

From The Beat: Quite an inventive piece you got going on there. There is this underground rap duo from Minneapolis (Midwest!!) called Eyedeah and Abilities and they do an awesome song from the goldfish's point of view. You should check it out or put your own piece to some beats.

Messing up

What's up? This is Destiny from Gilroy. Well shhh, I feel hella bad 'cause my Dad has done hella stuff for me and I take advantage. I don't know why, but maybe it's 'cause I'm selfish and want things my way. But you know what? My dad's coming to see me Sunday and I'm gonna tell him that I'm gonna change because look at all these things I put him through. I feel bad!

I know I can change. I gotta put my mind to it. These dumb broads all talking shhh but you know no dumb girls are gonna get me down. Forget all that! I'm gonna change for me and my family! I just wanna tell my dad sorry for everything I've done. I'm gonna make it through everything, watch Dad! I love you and I'm gonna change. Promise!

-Destiny

From The Beat: It sounds like your Dad is a real inspiration for you and that you do want to change. But do you really have to put down other girls and use that as your inspiration?

Driftin' On My Haunted Memory

Well it's that homeboy Chuco. Well I had this bad nightmare 'bout my grandpa. When I was five I had this dream that my grandpa was getting shot up and I woke up crying and my moms and pops heard and they came in. Then they called my grandpa. Then very early in the morning my moms and pops took me to my grandpa's house and I was all better.

Then one week later my grandpa passed away on May first and we buried him on May fifth. My grandpa got the name Chuco when he was a kid and it stuck with him his whole life and now I go by that name.

Well to all, stay up and much love and respecto. One Love, RIP Chuco.

-Chuco

From The Beat: What an interesting story for how you got your name! What is a story that you want your grandson to tell about you?

Disappointment

My mom disappointed me on my court day. I was going to get out that day but then she told my public defender that she didn't want me at home. If I wanted to go home I needed to go to Ranch first, at first it makes me angry but now I'm trying to forget it. I'm going to make myself work hard at the ranch then I'm going to do my time and go back home.

- Parka

From The Beat: Sorry to hear about your additional sentence time. Sounds like you have accepted what it is and are going to make the most of the situation.

My Uncle

An elder for me is my Uncle Alvaro. He's in prison right now. Don't get him wrong though, he's not a bad person. He just did some dumb things. The reason he's in there is alcohol and burglaries. But he taught me how to do a lot, just to enjoy myself and have a good time and I respect him for that. So I look forward to him getting out - so maybe we can chill again.

It's been a couple of years. But for him and everyone, the difficulty lies in opportunity. Forget the haters, there's always better ways to do things. Don't slip.

Thank you Beat for letting me speak...

-Mondo

From The Beat: Your Uncle Alvaro sounds like he was a good friend to you. But did he give you good advice or show you how to live a safe and healthy life? Maybe no one can show us this - perhaps we have to learn it for ourselves.

An Elder of California

Let me extend my utmost love and respect to all who come across my words—alrato, down to business.

My elder of choice I personally choose is my abeula. (For those who don't speak Spanish that means grandma.) Well, she actually was first generation of the cholo era. She introduced la raza lifestyle to my mother in which was passed down to my generation.

My abuela's generation was more hand to hand combat and she shares her longed memories of such times. Now she says she worries 'cause of the senseless violence. And she's right. Senseless violence!

Our raza of Mestizos were brought up by native tribes that had great cora (courage). We use to fight toe to toe not endangering the innocent by stray bullets or "shanking" because one is too frightened to take a beating.

From one young cholito to the others, what happened to our tradition of Aztec pride? Gangs will always be around and choices will always be made but who has the courage? A fighter or a shooter? I suggest you follow Mestizos, learn your cultura (culture). I'm not perfect, if I was I wouldn't be here. But know this, if your familia was shot 'cause of senseless violence and they were innocent bystanders what would you think? Now flip the script, it's a trip huh? Aztecas are warriors but cowards so you do the math. If we were able to fight the Europeans back when, hand to hand, why not now? If it's respecto (respect), you will settle it man to man without innocent casualties... 'cause then, why do you get respect for taking innocent lives? With that I end this.

Let me exit this the same way I've entered with my utmost love and respect. Stay educating yo'selves!

-Educated G

From The Beat: You discuss a pertinent topic! Countless people are impacted by the death of innocent bystanders. What do young people need to do about this? You add important points to such a conversation.

If My Pet Could Talk

First of all my pet is a pit bull and the things he would say would be like: 'What's going on the outs?' He would say this while looking out the living room window. Dogs are very smart if you train them that way. They get into fights over the simplest things. They would also be just like people, doing whatever they can to keep their mind busy. Not all dogs are retarded.

-Mondo

From The Beat: Yes, dogs are very smart and trainable. It's funny how some people just don't understand that. We like how you made an analogy comparing being locked up to being stuck inside the house and waiting for someone to let you out as a dog.

Grandma

An elder that is very important in my life is my grandma. My grandma is very special to me. she's like the mom I never had. She was there when no one else could be.

-Andrew

From The Beat: Tell us how she has played such an important role in your life.

Disappointment

Well what's up Beat, this is that one and only homie from San Jose. I've been disappointed many times, like when my dad said he was going to stop drinking but he never did, that shhh makes me hella mad. Well that's pretty much it, till next time, Late.

-Abe

From The Beat: Though this is a short piece, it speaks to many of our experiences. You make your point clear. Here's nothing like being let down by those closest to us. What you do with your experience is on you.

Car Accidents

It's not so much that the memory haunts me, but it's more of a learning experience for me. Over the last year or so, I've been in so many car accidents that it's really not funny. So, now it's not that I don't think it's going to happen, but more like: When's it going to happen? Ha ha!

-James Brown Funk

From The Beat: We totally know what you mean. Once you get in a number of car accidents, you start totally expecting that particular car crunch sound. It really does get embedded in your memory. Well, stay safe out there!

Grandmother

My special elder in my life would be my grandmother. She has always been there for me and she continues to be there for me now.

I lived with her when I was in the first and second grade, and I later lived with her when I was in junior in high school.

She is the best grandmother anyone could have. No matter whatever I go through she is always there. Even if I'm in the wrong or she might not agree with my decisions, she's going to be there supporting me and showing me love. That's what a good parent/grandparent should do in my eyes.

I thank her for that and continue to pray to God that I'll be able to stay with her as long as I possibly can.

-Daddy

From The Beat: It is so important to have support from someone like this in our lives, someone who loves us unconditionally. You are very lucky.

The Memory of Being Out With My Boys

A memory that still haunts me is being with my boys drinking and shhh it just comes up all the time. I just wish I was being out there right now. It comes up all the time.

I just wish I was out there right now. But I know I did wrong by getting caught. But it's all good Beat the hall keeps me from smoking weed and drinking so that part is coo' being in here just makes you think and think about your family, and the people you care about, just knowing you messed up.

When I cut out of the hall I am gonna try not to come back, well gots to go peace. Alrato Beat.

-Jonathan

From The Beat: Do you think your mind is clearer and stronger when you're not drinking and smoking? When you get out, what do you plan on doing? Will you go back to your boys, or do you have a different plan?

The Day I Got Jumped

Well a memory that haunts me it the day I got jumped.

That was one of the days I just want to get out of my mind. The beating was not that bad, it's just that it feels like you have no control over what's happening, and me the way I am, I need control over what's going on.

But getting jumped with a messed up hand left me having no power over it. That's just 1 bad memory in my life but my goal will be 2 never let that happen again, well I got to go stay up to all the homeboys in the hall time get out. I am out before Christmas, may be back, never know, late.

-Rascal

From The Beat: We had to cut the part where you spoke on revenge, and we'd do it again - because revenge is selfish. You'd be willing to deprive your loved ones of having you in your life, just so you could get get back? You'd sacrifice your dreams, your future, your chance to be somebody in this world, just for a revenge that would ADD to your suffering, and the suffering in the world? No. You deserve better. You will read this response before your release. We sure hope you think about it.

How My Life Changed

Well, my life changed in freshmen year. I thought high school was going to be easy. I found out it wasn't, 'cause it was so easy to do what I wanted. I started cutting class and Smoking.

Then I met this guy Blackie. He wasn't a good person. He never told me to do good, to not drink, not to get high. Then he got locked up and I realized he's not the one.

I started changing little by little when I met this guy Gary. He didn't want me to smoke cigarettes or drink, but I still drink. He's still there for me. He still tries to make me quit drinking. He will tell me to do good. I would try, but it was hard.

I started running away and my mom felt it was his fault. It wasn't. Then I got locked up for the first time. My boyfriend is still there for me. He makes me feel better about myself. Then I got out and a little thing I did got me back in here.

My boyfriend is still there. He taught me to be a stronger and better person and to follow my dreams no matter what and that I still have a chance. Well, I want to thank my man Gary for making me realize this is not worth it! And now I'm a better person and I will stay a better person.

-Ruby

From The Beat: Well, Gary sounds like a great influence on you. But you shouldn't only depend on him - it seems like you can be a better person on your own.

If Pets Could Talked

If pets could talk, than you wouldn't need a friend at all. I mean you'd have somebody to talk to, que no? Also, don't they say that a man's best friend is a dog? Well, think about it, your dog or pet will help you with lots of stuff. Plus, there's some people that don't like to talk with other people or family members that they don't trust, so you'll can ask it for some advice cause he's your pet and not a person - so I guess you'll trust it more than a human, eh?

Well, pues in my point of view I'll trust my pet more than anybody else cause I don't trust no men. That doesn't include a dog, que-no? So, I guess I rather talk to my dog than to a man. Well, this peligroso has to bounce so this is alrato for now. So late, till this pencil meets some other Beat topic - I'm out.

-PI

From The Beat: Hmmm, it's true, dogs are very loyal and many people do share their deepest secrets with their dogs because they won't tell anybody. But do you think your dog would give you good advice or tell you to get out of the game?

If My Pet Could Talk

What up Beat? Well today I'm gonna talk about what my pit would say if she could talk. Well, first of all, since on the outs she's with me 24/7 - she always looks at me when am eating with a stupid look on her face like trying to say: "What you got? Let me get some! Which is something that I think she picked up from my lady. Ha ha!

And also if there's a bench and me and my home boys are sitting down on it and there's no room, she tries to sit on it and she will push you out the way, like: "Let's play! I'm bored!" Or: "Take me for a walk!" All right, that's it Beat. I'm out!

- Notorious

From The Beat: All these stories about how human people's pit bulls are really put a smile on our face this week. It shows the loving side under the tough exterior that you all put up. But does your lady know you think she begs like a dog??

Disappointment

When I get disappointed, I get very angry. 'Cause when you are in that situation you don't know what you are doing, 'cause you are very angry and you don't care cause you don't think.

After you do something, you regret everything that you do. But everyone makes mistakes in life. No one is perfect in life.

-Lil' Downer

From The Beat: It sounds like those regrets have taken away from your happiness, and you wish you hadn't acted in that anger. Have you ever taken an anger management class? Do you believe they help?

My Best Friend

Hey Beat, what's good?

If my pet could talk, my pit and I would be best friends going on a mission to look for some love, you feel me? My pit bull would probably tell me to blaze him out, or hook him up with sum bud brownies. I know for a fact he would want me to take him out cruising.

Or when we are at home, and I change the channel, he would probably be like: "Foo, why you change?" That's what I think.

-PlayBoy

From The Beat: This piece made us laugh out loud thinking of your dog saying that on the couch. Dog's really do become like humans and are the most loyal friends. We know you're dog will still show you love when you change your old ways and put the weed down!

Chicano

I am brown but being black or white is fine
but being brown is where I'm from holding my fist up to
the air.

Showing that I'm Chicano and that I care
the hood I now live in

One day when I reach my goal I'll have the future
between my soul.

Right now I ain't got much but I got my pride. T
hat's more than any vato has inside.

To all Alrato.

-G

From The Beat: How does Chicano pride actually work for you? Does it motivate you to realize your own success? We are wondering what it really means to be living a Chicano lifestyle.

Haunted By A Choice

A memory that still haunts me is when I broke up with
my ex and I did him hella dirty.

Me and my ex were going through some problems and
I had this close-ass friend and he came by to see me and
my ex was there and it was drama. So, I told my ex that I
couldn't be with him anymore and he was really hurt, and
to top it off he has my name on him – but I had to do it
'cause he was just too much and I got with my close-ass
friend right there.

-Sarah

From The Beat: Have you ever talked to your ex about what happened? Often, we are haunted by moments in our life that we don't have proper closure on. Maybe write him a letter or give him a call when you get out.

RIP Homie

Well, Beat this is Psycho minded vato once again
dropping some linias.

Well Beat, a memory that disturbs me is thinking that my
homies passed away. It disturbs me because in the outs,
we would kick it day after day.

Then when I come in here, I heard someone had
die and I asked my homegirl, and she told me it was my
homie. I couldn't believe it because it seem like we were
just kicking it yesterday. He lived a short life. fifteen, but
I guess that's what happens by gangbanging.

RIP Adrian aka Menece. Well Beat this psycho minded
vato is gone. Alrato and much respect.

-Lil' Psycho

From The Beat: Although everyone who loses a loved one to the violence of the streets knows the same pain, there are really no words to describe it. To us, the tragedy is that death is too high a price to pay for whatever comfort the gang (or the money, or the power) provides. Death is permanent. We're sorry for your loss.

My Motivation

Hey, Beat, it's me Damaged Khmer. My motivation is my
little brother. He turns six months November thirteenth,
2007. He keeps me strong, because when he grows up I
cannot let him be like me.

It would tear up my heart if I was incarcerated for
years and miss his baby time. But I gotta be strong and
I can't wait to see him when I'm out. He'll be almost 10
months when I'm out, so I can't wait.

And thanks Beat for letting me express myself. It
helps a lot and keeps me really motivated.

-Damaged Khmer

From The Beat: We always feel a warm heart beating in the pieces you write for us, DK, so we have to thank you for making The Beat the best that it is. Just keep letting your little brother motivate you never to come back to a place like this.

Missing My Baby

What's up with it, Beat. Today I'm going to write about
some shhh that tripped me out yesterday.

I was walking to the clinic and I was waiting for control
to open the door for me. They were taking hella long to
let me in and I was wondering what was going on. I guess
they were talking to some new admit and that new admit
just happened to be my man!

When I seen my man I was kind feeling confused
because I didn't know if I should be mad at him for coming
back to the Hall or if I should just be happy to see him.
So, of course, we talk to each other. And yes, when I saw
him, he did put a big-ass smile on my face. I think he was
mad, but I'm not sure.

I thought about it for a minute and I'm not gonna be
mad at him because I'm in the same freakin' space as
him. To me that doesn't make any sense to be mad at him
'cause we probably feel the same way about each other.
And I know were both going to get over it sooner or later,
so there's just no point in getting pissed off.

Damn, for some reason I hella do care about this guy
named Jose. There's just something about him that I
hella like. And plus, he's my ugly – well not to me. I think
he's cute, or should I say I know he's cute! Anyways, I
just want him to know that I'm sorry for not writing him
and for getting locked up again. I want to be with him
and hopefully things turn out to be good between us. I'll
always be thinking of him and he'll always be on my mind.
Well that's it for now – but 'till next time, I'm still here.

-Loonie

From The Beat: This sounds like such a dramatic scene – like out of a movie. It is interesting that you both seem to be hiding things from each other, but it sounds like you want to work it out. Good luck!

My Great Grandma

I'm going to tell you my special elder is my great grandma.
She taught me so much my whole life. She tried to make
me a better person, but I went my own way. She never
turned on me and she never will.

-Unsigned

From The Beat: You were lucky to have her in your life. What can you do to make her proud of you?

Disappointment

I been disappointed since the moment I came to juvenile
hall. Disappointed with myself, as well as those people I
thought were friends. I shouldn't have given in when they
asked me to hang out. I should have known they were
trouble from the moment I met them.

Now day and night, I sit here alone. I'm disappointed
in myself because this was going to be my last Halloween
at home with my younger siblings. Disappointed, because
I was on track to graduate and have a great senior year.
And now, I'm just another statistic. A no one. I not only
disappointed in myself, but also my in my family. Dealing
with all this disappointment has been rough and I felt like
giving up, but I know that when I finally get to go home I
will work even harder to become more than what I wanted
to be before. I'm going to show everyone that this huge
obstacle couldn't hinder me from becoming someone
important.

-Vanessa

From The Beat: Well, it certainly isn't over. You are a bright and articulate young woman who is a great writer. We bet you that 10 years from now, you'll be telling the story about the time you got locked up to young people who you are an inspiration to.

Talking To Me

Shhh if my pet could talk I must be hella high off some other stuff!

To be honest, my friend's pet used to talk to me when I went to his house, but only when I was high. Three hits of LSD will do it.

I can't tell you why, but his dog use to lick me on the face. That stuff haunts me but in a good way. That shhh was hella sick.

-Spooky

From The Beat: Man, it sounds like that dog loved you, whether you were high or not. Have you ever had a dog of your own?

What Is A Memory That Still Haunts You

Hey, what 'sup Beat? It's me again, Damaged Khmer.

Well, this is a memory I have that still haunts me, and it's from my dream.

It was when my grandma then my mom passed away while I was incarcerated. I'll never forgive myself, because I won't get to say I love you to them, and how much they really mean to me. I'd probably cry myself until I ran out of tears, and that's the memory that always haunt and scares me every day.

But I gotta try to stay strong. Well, all right the Beat, peace.

-Damaged Khmer

From The Beat: It probably won't help, but we know that your mom and grandma both already knew how much you loved them, even without hearing you say the words. It is always a hard thing to lose those we love the most, and when you are locked up, there is nothing you can do about it. When this is over, make them proud of you.

I Promise, Grandma

Ey, disappointment for me is when I got locked up. It sucks, but it happens for a reason.

I know I disappointed my grandma real bad and that sucks. She expects more from me. But when I get out I promise grandma I'm going to do better.

-Unsigned

From The Beat: We hope the reason you are facing this disappointment is because you needed a wake-up call about consequences. If this truly has awakened you, then maybe it was necessary. Your grandma expects more from you because she knows the time will come that you will expect more from yourself. So why not start now?

Why?

Life is shhh in certain areas. It truly does suck at some points. There are certain times when you want to just give up on life and just say "forget it!" Like me, I've gone through some shhh since I been here, which is juvenile hall in Santa Clara county.

The system I'm in is so messed up! There are so many cracks in this system it's not even funny. I've been in this same unit for about ten months now. It's my first time being locked up, and I'm in this security max unit. This is my first unit and it will be my LAST that I will ever be in.

This place will get to you after a while and it's not even cool. There is just maybe a couple of things that were good that came out of this experience. One of those things is I don't act like how I used to. I've become a little more mature than when I was out.

-Evek

From The Beat: Do you think the maturity you wrote about would have happened even if you were not locked up, or did that experience make you grow up faster? Can you list some of the ways he system is messed up? How would you fix those things if you were in charge?

Disappointment

How do you deal with disappointment?

I will try to fix what I did wrong.

How do you address your feeling?

Sometimes I will get pissed off.

How do you react?

I start to hit things.

Do you get mad?

Yes, I do get mad?

Does it make you try harder?

Yes, it does

How do resolve your feelings?

Smoke a cigarette

Have you disappointed someone?

I have disappointed someone

I have disappointed my mom and family

Pet Story

What kind of stories would your pet talk about?

He will talk about when me an' him got high and he threw up on me.

What opinions might he have?

"Why did you get me high?"

-Monkey

From The Beat: Even though you don't have to answer every question to write what's on your mind, we like the way it sounds in your piece, like a poem. It's good that disappointment strengthens your resolve to change. We already know what your dog wants you to change!

Truth

What's crackin' Beat. It's Koh Deen saying what's up? Anyway, I might be getting out tomorrow (pray). Any who, I've enjoyed reading The Beat, and I would like to tell everyone out there, life goes on and don't let anything stop you from goals. I've learned a lot from being here in the hall and writing for The Beat. See ya later people.

-Koh Deen

From The Beat: We hope you'll write to The Beat and tell us how the things you've learned are helping you stay free. Thank you, and good luck.

Falling Down

I've fallen down I can't get up

I've fallen down I can't get up

It always seems like something pulling me down.

I try and get up but I'm too close to the ground

Deeper and deeper I go

How I get up I don't know

Every time I get to the top

I get pulled down to the flo

All this falling down is tearing me apart

I thought it was the end

I guess it's just the start

-Flex

From The Beat: Who pulls you down each time you move forward? Is it things beyond your control, or things you control? The only way to get out a deep hole is step by step.

My Grandfather The General

An elder that is special in my life is my grandfather. He was a

general in the Vietnamese army and I have high respect for him.

He's one of few people that I look up to.

-Ly

From The Beat: Has your grandfather told you any stories about his life, about what he remembers? He must have more to teach you about life than any history book we could find!

What My Pet Would Say

Well, I have a pet iguana and these are the stories he would say: "Hey! When you gonna feed me? I'm hungry." Or, "When are you going to bathe me? I'm dirty. Take me for a walk."

So then we could finally talk. "You named me Green, and that's really cool because I'm not mean, and I don't need an evil name. I love you so much. You're my best friend. I'll love you forever and ever until the very end."

-Green

From The Beat: Well, you have a very passionate iguana. Who is taking care of Green now?

An Elder

What's up Beat? It's that one and only uso still holding up in here. I am that last uso standing in this max unit. Got two more months, then I am in the wind.

But anyways, well, my grandpa would always say in Samoan to always love your pops and mom and stop getting in trouble in school and finish it. But I always said all right and just bounce out th house. Three-four in the morning, tell them I am in Juvenile Hall and my grandpa would not tell me those lines and wisdom words for me to get through life once a year. He would tell me those lines and words I will never forget 'till the day I leave this corrupted world.

Going Sa love to my uso.

-Giant Samoa

From The Beat: It's too bad that it sometimes takes a bitter experience to learn just how wise our grandfathers and mothers are. But it's never too late to think about the wisdom he's already passed to you ("finish school"), and to act on it.

Disappointed Today

Disappointment is something that I felt today when I went to court. My public defender told me we won't bring me down unless it's serious because I'm in max unit and he have to get escorted everywhere. So he hasn't been bringing me down for my courts.

But today he brought me down for court and they just continued it again. I was mad because I have only been here two months.

Stay up to everyone doing time.

-Lil' Chris

From The Beat: Waiting for something to happen can be one of the most frustrating experiences of being locked up. The answer is that when you do walk out of here (or some place like here), you have to make the changes that will never lead you back.

Disappointment

Usually I deal with disappointment with emotions of anger and frustration. When I disappoint someone else, I become frustrated because most likely it can be avoided. When I disappoint, it reflects immaturity and stupidity.

After, I always end up asking myself, "Why don't I just think before I do stupid things?" But in the end, I try to make it a learning experience, which is a blessing rather than constantly getting myself down about it. It is impossible to move forward with success without forgiving yourself in the process. Once I am forgiven, I can begin to use disappointment as a foundation for a better future.

-The Authority

From The Beat: When you say "once you are forgiven," do you mean once you forgive yourself? You have a very philosophical approach to your situation based on a desire to succeed, which should help to take some of the sting out of being here... Have you forgiven yourself?

Yaqui Speaks

If my pet Chihuahua could talk, he would have a lot to say. His name is Yaqui and my lady treat him like it's our son. He has shoes, sweats, jackets and he sleeps in the same bed as us.

If he could talk, he would say stuff like, "You snore hella loud at night," and, "Why don't you eat this dog food and I will eat what you are eating?"

That would be cool. I would just chill and drink with him and he would chop it up and we would be like father and son.

-Lil' Chris

From The Beat: So, who's the father and who's the son? (If Yaqui was your son, you'd have to admit that he's an S-O-B.)

A Haunting Memory

A memory that haunts me is when I was little and I used to live with my step dad and my mom. He used to beat me and my brother and my mom up all the time. He used to say, if we told, he would kill us. But years later we finally told and we got out of there. I went with my grandparents. We told the police but they couldn't do nothing 'cause it was so many years.

-Unsigned

From The Beat: This is not the only piece from your unit about child abuse. What can you suggest to prevent this kind of abuse of children? (We suggest that you choose one topic to write on, and not three or four topics. When you do that, you can't really tell us much about any of the topics. Even though you make us interested each time, we hope that you will write more on one theme next time.)

Too Many Months

Well it's Spooky, trying to stay out of the Ranch. I'm getting some hall time so I'll be out in 2008.

I'm gonna be out I've been locked up for one year and five months, so that's 17 months straight up in here. I can't get out the system because they got me stuck in here.

Well Beat Within, I'll check up on you next week.

-Spooky

From The Beat: That's a long time to be behind a locked door - we're glad you've got a "free date" to look forward to. What are your plans for when you get out?

My Disappointment

My disappointment is why do I do stuff to get in trouble. When I could do much better than the way I am. I never had a dad. It was just me, my mom and three sisters. That is why I am the way I am.

I never had someone tell me robbing people was wrong or have someone tell me how to get money the right way. That's why I post up on the block and sell rock after rock. I don't know. I have urges to do bad things and then I end up locked up.

On my way to the Ranch, but I think it's the best for me because before I know, I am going to end up somewhere stuck in the pen. I don't want to follow the road like my cousins, brother, or uncles went through. That why when I get out I am going to slow down, live life as a 16-year-old instead of a grown man. So then I show my punk-ass dad that I still came out successful without him.

My court is tomorrow. I hope things go coo'. All right then, Beat, I am out.

-Stuck

From The Beat: All children need role models to pattern their behavior after. Unfortunately, in your life, your role models taught you to do things that risk everything, from your freedom to your life. But if this experience helps to make you the decent role model your children will need (when you become a father), then maybe it was necessary to help you grow into a man.

Disappointment Fudge That... Letting Me Down

Letting me down, talk is so cheap,
 yo' mouth sitting here blah blah scrappin' pennies.
 Having my trust recycled.
 You wasn't even there to help my mom.
 I don't call you dad I don't even know what that means.
 Coming to my grouper telling these white people what
 they wanna hear.
 It don't go no where, it don't even appear.
 Tryin' to teach me something
 fake as fudge,
 you in jail, don't drop that soap good luck!
 Sit down and let me teach you 'cause you don't know
 nothing about me.
 Do you even know how to spell my name
 it's M-A-L-J-A-N-A.
 Stay out of jail if you really care.
 It ain't that easy but I did it.
 Get wit' it or get found 'cause you lost,
 that bull shhhh you running it's been tossed!

-Maljanae

From The Beat: We like your choice of words. It's just too bad that your father wasn't the responsible dad that you could look up to. We hope this reality in your life only makes you stronger and only pushes you to make the right choices in life and stay out of jail, it is easy.

Missing Home

Man I miss you dad. I feel like you are the only one that
 understands me and knows the reality of what happens
 to us 'cause we black.
 I miss grandma and grandpa.
 I think about it every night before I go to bed,
 sometimes I cry.
 I'm in a program and I'm doing better me and my lil'
 ninja JJ are doing good and staying out of trouble.

-Lil' Awake

From The Beat: It's a good thing that you have a dad who understands you. Finish your program and continue to stay out of trouble. Your dad's at home waiting for you.

Special Grandma

A special elder in my life was my grandma who just
 passed away this year. She had just turned 67 years old,
 but she died of a stroke.
 I listen and because I do not want to cry, why talk
 about those things.
 My grandmother was a very pretty person who loved
 all my cousins and sisters.

-Grandchild

From The Beat: Sorry for your loss. Your grandmother is watching over you, so make her proud.

Instead

Instead of cryin' and fighting I'm gonna write all night
 and show 'em I'm not lyin'. I'm gonna express instead of
 disappear, 'cause I'm a soldier, not a gangster. I'm a prime
 example of a use-to-be-failure, but now the light has
 shone and my mind opened up, wisdom is what it is. The
 light I never seen, but in my dream my anger is caused by
 you leaving and now that gasoline has vanished, I can get
 on with my life, jus' me and my soon to be wife no more
 dread and no more tears shed over you, 'cause this ninja
 is a prime example of success.

-Deangelo

From The Beat: Success is the word we see in your future. Continue with this same attitude and there's no telling where you can go. Your pieces are very good and we look forward to reading more of them from you.

Lead

I felt that lead
 it was hot and it made me shed tears and caused my
 body to dread in pain
 no remorse is what it taught me,
 show no fear,
 show no weakness and don't hesitate to bust a grape
 is my example of no remorse and a young man gone bad
 because of the so called "homies" the only homie I got
 is within me
 you have to dig deep and release that relentless beast,
 I'll show you how.

-Deangelo

From The Beat: This sounds like sadness and anger. Put your negative feelings towards positive things. Like if your feeling angry work out or speak with someone you feel comfortable with. Your smart you know who a true friend is, not to many people can see that.

"Unknown Father"

Blood bled tears shed
 this is only a place to one,
 Only you didn't hear me so I write to tell you, you
 shouldn't fear me.
 But please hear me.
 My life wouldn't be the way it is if you were a man and
 didn't walk out,
 walk out of my life and left me for dead,
 but now I am the man you could only wish to be
 and when I have children I'm gonna show 'em
 how a man is suppose to be ,
 you still don't hear me?
 Well if you do just know, I think of you as a hoe.
 No wait I ain't the one to call names, or blame
 so I write to tell you, when I make it famous don't call
 me your son
 I know it would probably would be fun fo' one to call me
 your son,
 I got a father now, my mom's brother,
 so my journey of looking fo' you has stopped
 and a man, you could never be stepped up
 and showed me how a man is 'pose to be.

-Deangelo

From The Beat: This is such a good piece Deangelo. Sometimes in life we go through difficult struggles not realizing that the struggle is changing us, making us a stronger person. Good for your uncle for stepping up and showing you how to be a young man.

An Elder, My Mama

I love you mama.

We lived in the projects so you know there was drama
 but you didn't give up and you was there. You are not here
 but you care. Looking at me making steps growing up and
 getting older, you my angel standing on my shoulders.

You was my sis, my teacher, teaching me about this
 world, even though things wouldn't be good, you always
 seem happy, you'll be angry with all five of yo' kids wit' a
 dead beat daddy, CPS come swooping in, while I'll be in
 that purple and khaki sayin' some bull shhhh about some
 mistakes, but you hung in there with effort.

That's all it takes, you helped me become the smart
 young one that I am.

Mama you was smart too... but you didn't need no
 man...

RIP Mama aka Janelle Scott.

-Maljanae

From The Beat: You sound proud of your "mama" and you should be. Not everyone is as lucky as you. You said your mom made you who you are today and that is something you should carry with you for the rest of your life. We only have one mama.

Stay Out Of Trouble

What I would tell the old me is to stay out of trouble. For example, don't do anymore drugs or drink alcohol because it don't do me any good and I think I'm going to be a new me because the old me just doesn't do me any good. It got me here at SEF and other trouble.

My mom always tells me to change and try to be a new me and as soon as I get out, I'm thinking about planning to change. I could work on a career and do something with my life.

-Javier

From The Beat: Javier-your time is detention has you reevaluating your actions and the outcomes. Sometimes we need to slow down and even stop from our life full of so many activities and figure out which ones are the ones that actually are what we are all about. So what do you want to say about yourself in the way you live your life once you leave detention? How will the way you live your life impact those you love most?

Using My Time in Here

First of all, I'm going to try to keep myself isolated. But at the same time, keep myself entertained by reading books, watching TV and doing chores. I try to get my red shirt and things like that. Sometimes that can be hard because I'm bipolar and I always get sudden urges to fight.

Some people in here also tell me what to do, but I have my own problems. That's why I think I'm losing it. I might just lose control and hurt somebody. That's why I keep myself isolated. I try not to communicate with other people because there are people from stupid gangs in here. They probably don't like me; but I'm not from a gang.

People think I'm from a gang because of the way I look. I don't like them either. I'm not a person that likes to fight, but if it comes down to it, somebody's going to get hurt and it ain't going to be me. So that's another reason why I isolate myself. Another reason is because I don't like anybody because they always judge by the first thing that they see and that's just stupid.

-Daniel

From The Beat: First off, you sound like you know that even fighting gets you nowhere fast. Staying isolated in detention is usually a good thing, but does it usually work for you when you're not in detention? Whether you're locked up or not, you're always going to meet people who may judge you or give you orders. So, how do you handle these feelings then? What are you doing besides keeping isolated to make sure you don't lose control of your feelings and end up spending your life in prison? Are you seeking professional help? You're off to a good start by putting your feelings on paper because it usually helps reduce such intense feelings.

Them Days

I have my ups and downs most of the time. I call those good days. But when it comes to the bad times, it's like going through a tunnel-trying to see the light. So I continue fighting to see the bright lights and I get most things off of my chest as best as I can. I take a stroll or do whatever comes to mind.

One of those days can be caused by a family fight or everybody trying to get over. I don't like to see family mad at each other. They're supposed to stick together and to be strong; to reunite. There's even good times when we are going up hill instead of down hill. But those are one of my worst days. When it comes down to it, it really comes down to it. The worst days start with alcohol-but I can't let that get to me. Alcohol destroys relationships with family; so does drugs. Some people let that stuff get to them on weekends. Weekends are some of the worst days because most of them are intoxicated and don't know what they are doing. It's just one of them days.

-Julian

From The Beat: As long as you make sure that you keep alcohol and drugs out of your life, you'll be on the right track. We know you can't control if others do the same, but you can control how you let their decisions impact your life. It sounds like you know what a family "should" be and that will help you in the future if you have your own family someday. Continue to be strong. Continue to take strolls or whatever it may be that helps you cope in a positive way.

Dear Judge

This time has been so hard for me. The last time I walked through the court door I didn't see

my grandma's face and not once has she come to my visiting.

It hurts me to be in here again because on the outs

I tried to better myself.

I applied for jobs and even registered for school.

I didn't smoke nor drink so now I can say I'm cool.

I don't want to live my life behind these jail walls.

It doesn't feel right to be told how long you have in these shower stalls.

Every day I have to worry about my family's safety but with me being in here there's nothing I can really do about it.

I want to be let free

to prove that I'm willing to change in front of everyone's eyes so they can see.

Yes, I'm young and I've made dumb decisions but I'm tired of this and I learned my lesson.

It may not look that way

because of what my record might say, but I don't think that should matter.

I think it's the heart that has us choose better.

-Babyboo

From The Beat: Just because you fell again doesn't mean you can't get back up again. No one said this would be easy for you. Life isn't easy for anybody; you're not in this alone. We trust that the judge will order what's best for you; so why don't you? Just keep trying to better yourself when you get out this time around. That in itself will prove to everyone that you've learned your lesson and are following your heart. PS: You're right NOT drinking or smoking makes you cool! So, let's try to spread that idea around, okay?

*I think it's the heart that
has us choose better.*

Changed Life

Now that I am here locked up in a cell thinking about what I could have done differently instead of doing what I did, I just pray to the Lord to set me free. I changed completely in here. I have realized that the life I was living was no way I want to live because it's just going to make me end up in places like here or maybe even dead. I wasn't thinking of doing much for my life - not going to school, hanging with the homies, staying out all night, and not knowing how worried my mom would be.

Now that I'm in here, I want to get out so I can finish school and find a job to help my parents and make them proud. I'm tired of living the way I was. My aunt and uncles would judge me because of what they heard about me and I'm tired. I want to prove to my parents that I have changed but most of all, I want to show my niece right from wrong. I don't want her to end up in a place like this or make the same mistakes.

- Yasmine

From the Beat: Yes, sometimes it's important to prove people wrong and this can be a good motivator to do right but it's even more important to prove to yourself that you've changed because if you have that self confidence you'll stay on the right track. Being a good role model is one thing a lot of teenagers forget about so keep telling yourself that it is very important to show your niece how to make good choices; because it is! Believe it or not, if you stay on the right track you'll be a good role model for just about everyone in your life.

Deceived

Man, I can't stand this world.
 How you gon' tell me I don't have a lil' girl?
 How you gon' believe someone that's never there for me?
 She was always the one who deceived me.
 I'm not even by her side.
 Yet, she still got the courage to lie.
 Yes, I'm locked up but it doesn't matter.
 Ya'll never want to believe us,
 The one's who aren't in our lives...you still choose her.
 I don't need this.
 Don't you think I already put up with this?
 On the outs...
 my grandma never had to think twice about dialing 911,
 without a doubt.
 She ain't even there for me.
 She never comes to court or my visitings.
 She don't even want me no more.
 She told her lies and now I lay on this cold cell floor.
 Got confined, lost my shirt...
 You really think I want this? No, 'cause of what it's
 worth.
 I got court in two days and am supposed to be in a red
 shirt. Ha ha ha, now I'm not.
 So, I guess I'll see you back here at 5 o'clock.
 I just don't understand...
 How can you do this to me, man.
 Don't you see the tears in my eyes?
 Which were brought by the lies told by her...
 She's thinkin' I have no worth.
 So tell me again...
 Her or me?
 Wait, wait, wait...
 I already know what the answer will be.

-Babyboo

From The Beat: The basis for relationships is trust. This piece is full of your feelings of anguish and grief over the betrayal and mistrust in your relationship with your grandmother. We are somewhat confused over whom you are directing this piece to, but it is apparent that trust, or a lack of it, is the ongoing theme. Where has trust broken down in your life and why? Writing is an appropriate place to process these feelings. We also hope you will find someone who can objectively listen to you and give you the validation and feedback you need.

A Risky Life

A good thing about being in a gang is all your homies that are in that gang got your back and if somebody is trying to mess around with your family, like try to kill one of your family and you tell your homies they will try to get that person. Or if you're with your homie and somebody tells you what's up he want to box you say he beat you up and if you last your homie will get in and your homies will never leave you down. And if you're gonna kick it with your homies at a kick back there's always girls and you could get a girlfriend there tell a girl whatsapp.

And a bad thing about being in a gang is doing a crime or a murder with your homies and if you do it and if you get caught by the cops you could do in prison 25 or life, or if you ain't putting work on a hood like throwing it up scrapping other gangs, tagging one of your homie from the same gang is gonna put you on check or scrap you.

-Cirino

From The Beat: The gang life may have it's benefits, like allowing you to be part of a group and having your back in a fight. Unfortunately, the gang life cannot offer you a happy future, if any future at all. Most gangsters end up dead, injured or in prison, and what good is it then? True friends want you to be the best you can be and to live the longest and happiest life possible. Running around with the homies in the hood may seem like a good idea now, but once they're all in prison or dead, who's gonna have your back then? Would you rather get locked up together or see each other live long happy lives with good jobs and a healthy family? You may not think it's possible, but it is. The gang life may seem like a great thing now, but it will only lead to death. Will you choose life or death?

Baby

I'm sitting here up in this cold cell thinking of us and all we've been through. I wonder if I would have never met you, who would I be? Probably dead or close to it. You saved me, but at the same time you dragged me down. I love you no matter what you've done. But if you don't change, we'll have to be through, because I can't do this any more. It hurts me too bad to see us like this; so close, but yet so far away. You choose this time; it's not on me. Just remember that no matter what you choose - I'm always here for you.

I've told you once and I'll tell you again...you're the one for me, but if you continue down the path you're on, we can no longer be. So, if you care for me the way you say, then do the right thing for us. Just remember that I'm not playing this time, so please....don't play games with my mind. You might think that what I'm doing is not fair, but oh well...I need this for me to stay clean. So please, listen to me. I want to follow my heart, but I have to do the right thing. I'm sorry Boo, but I have to do what's right for me. So please, understand where I'm coming from. No matter what happens I will love you 'til the very end of time.

-Kandy

From The Beat: Kandy, by setting limits you are making choices yourself, to respect yourself and that is healthy and ok. We want you to recognize that it is not just one person that "makes or breaks" a relationship, but two, and sometimes we have to make a difficult choice to walk away from what is not in our best interest...the decision is not just one person's decision...but two people who decide on whether they will just settle or will strive for the best in their relationships and in life.

Dear Old Me:

This is the old me here to straighten you out with a few works of advice. You need to know now that you can't go messing up with the drugs and the violence. I know how you used to be and it's shameful. All you used to do is smoke weed, drink and sit around all day. After a while, you wind up in jail. You don't want to be there-trust me.

You started smoking when you were 11 and kept smoking until 2007. Straighten yourself up! Just don't smoke' it won't help you. Just take the bad times and store them in the back of your mind. Just take the stressful times and take them out in the gym. You don't want to be that way. It's a new day from now on.

Sincerely,
 The new me

-Matt

From The Beat: You've give yourself some good advice. We hope you take it to heart! Sometimes the hardest advice to follow is your own. It's easy to say you've changed while you're locked up. The real test comes on the outs. Will you pass the test?

Change For The Better

This is a letter to the new me. So I could read it over and realize all the negative things I did and I know would regret every little thing I did.

I can take responsibility for my actions and think twice about what I do and take over my actions. I have to make new decisions so I can change and be a better person for myself and my family. The things I have to do are make positive moves and I'll be alright and I won't have to worry about anything-just myself. I know I need a job and that I can get a job. That will make my family proud of me and everyone that cares about me because I know that I can change. I believe in myself and I know that everyone else does.

The positive changes I have to make are to choose different friends and better people to kick it with. Then the influences would change and I will be a new Me.

-Julian

From The Beat: Julian, why have you been doing what you've been doing? What is it that motivates you and makes you happy? How will you go about meeting new friends? We want to encourage you in positive pursuits, but we also want you to realize that the changes you say you need may be uncomfortable and unfamiliar, initially, and you may be tempted to turn to what you already know. We encourage you to push forward past those uneasy feelings and accept that change takes time and determination. Don't give up, if the changes you seek don't come as fast as you may expect.

Disappointment

I've disappointed many loved ones by being here. Saying sorry wasn't enough, so now I'm sitting in jail, yeah, it makes that clear. I've disappointed myself, man, I never imagined that. I hardly thought about all the consequences out there, acting badly. I thought it was all fun and games 'till you're messed up in the end.

Something that you thought, but nah they ain't friends. They got me disappointing all my family and have them hurting, crying, sad, and weeping. I disappointed them by running to the streets, smoking, drinking, partying while their sleeping. I'm tired of hurting them, also, my self.

I have to quit living crazy, go home and live right. I'd rather make them laugh and smile and make them happy. I need someone to shake some sense into me, wait, better yet please slap me!

Disappointment is an awful feeling, trust me I know. I need to get up back on my feet and let the craziness go, and go back home and live clean and sober.

I never want to be in prison being a loner, or becoming messy again and being a lousy stoner.

I want to spread the word to the people like me. Just walk with our Lord, He'll change your life, you'll see. You might think He's a fib, a lie, a fake, a dream, but please obey Him, He'll turn you around and you'll know what I mean.

Don't disappoint all the people you love, they got your back homie, believe me, just don't slip and slack!

- Tweety

From The Beat: Now that you've realized, and come to terms that drugs and crime are not a game, do just as you said change your life and live a clean and sober life.

Grandma's Love

There ain't nothin' better then a grandma's love. Embalmed me with hugs, but still I turned out a thug.

I remember back when I was her baby boy. I had the chicken pox and every day she brought me a toy.

She is always by my side and I love her for that. I know there's always at least one person who's got my back. I ain't never gonna forget all the things she did.

Damn things changed since back when I was a kid, now I'm seventeen, locked up, facin' time and you're still by my side, sayin' it'll be alright.

I can't wait 'till I get released and hug you, for everything you do, I'm sayin' I love you.

- Currupt one

From The Beat: A parent or grandparent's love for their children is unending, no matter what our children do. The thing you must and should remember, the hurt and pain you put them through each time you make a bad choice. A choice that you know is right or wrong.

Time With My Cousin

The person I love to spend time with is my cousin, Klarissa. I love to spend time with her, because she is a positive person, and a positive influence when I need help with something or on something. She is always there for me when ever I need her. Whether I am in jail or I am on the out's we always spend a lot of time together since we were little.

-Shorty

From The Beat: If your cousin is this positive influence then you should listen more to her advice, so you don't have to see her while your in jail. The question is, are you getting into trouble while you are with your cousin? If this is the case, maybe its not a positive influence she is giving you.

My Life

I was born in Albuquerque, this life was destined for me.

Nothing but confusion in my mind

RIP to the "boys",

traps set on the streets ready for me to fail.

I don't want to see mamma crying or me being in jail, pain filled up in my heart.

I pray for better days,

picture me on top when it comes time for my life to change.

- The Duke

From The Beat: The traps are always there, not just for you but for every one. The difference is most people stay clear of these traps you talk of. Don't just picture your life changing, make the change and stay clear of them traps. Remember it's all about a choice.

Stuck With My Problem

All my life all I did was struggle

I always had to steal, manipulate or hustle

I really don't have much to give, but I gave anyway

It seems God never give me what He promises to repay
I take in so much and give a little back until I'm sick and tired

I blow up and leave peoples mouth wide

Most of my family are not surprised 'cause they think I'm crazy

It's a new generation

I'm 17 and broke,

I have nothin', and tryin' to take care of a baby

All my life I get a little sun

I see my mom get beat,

police kick doors or the sound of somebody shooting guns

I got locked up and got my GED

I plan to go to college, but I'm really ashamed to let people see me

I look back on all the good and bad things that happen

All the good and bad I've done

I think If I or some body else had a gun and put it to my head

All my problems will be done

This is not just a poem, this is how I feel

My plans and intensions are good, but my mind says

Kill, kill, kill

- Reggie

From the Beat: Your intensions are good, for one you have already mad a step in the right direction by getting your GED. Now it's time to put aside your pride of how people see you. Go to college, get a career, and forget about what people think. Forget about the gun, because in the end your efforts and pride will be the ones that put you on top.

Cat Talk

I am a cat in the street every day I search for food. All day every day on my feet I roam through the hood and where I stay the humans try and chase me out. It's like they want me to pay.

I wish I could eat a bit of trout; I fight hard for my spot. They want me dead. Every day the streets are hot, but I never let it go to my head I'm just trying to survive and make a life. I don't need no high five, every day gets harder. I'm glad I'm a cat because human's go through a lot of crap.

- King Henry

From The Beat: The unfortunate thing with humans is they bring most if not all the "crap" upon them selves. If it's the every day necessities you need ask for help, there are organizations out there to help people truly in need.

Las Mentiras De Los Amigos Malos

Los amigos le dicen a uno que van a ver cosas bonitas en las pandillas. A mí los amigos me decían que fueramos a fiestas y que íbamos a ver muchas chicas, que íbamos a salir a pasear, que todo iba a ser mejor, que íbamos ir al cine con todos los homies, pero no me decían que íbamos a andar en pelepas.

Después te dejan abajo cuando te agarra la policia. Ellos no hacen nada y tienes que ver tu mismo como salir del problema. Eso me pasó a mí. Me decían cosas que hiciera, pero yo pense a tiempo y casi me meto en una pandilla.

Yo no estoy aqui por eso sino por haber manejado un carro sin licencia. El carro me lo había prestado un amigo y el carro era robado. Yo no lo sabía y por eso estoy aqui. Esto es lo que les puedo contar de mi vida y lo que me ha pasado en mi vida.

From The Beat: Que bien que este tiempo te ha ayudado a ver las cosas más claras. Aléjate de esos amigos antes que te hagan hacer algo que marque toda tu vida. Las malas amistades no te lleban a nada bueno más que al lugar en que te encuentras o peor. ¿Que piensas hacer con esos amigos ahora? ¿Es tu decision! Escoge la correcta.

The Lies Of Bad Friends

Friends tell you that you'll see beautiful things in gangs. My friends used to tell me to come to parties to meet beautiful girls, to kick it, that we were going to go to the movies to have fun and that everything was going to be fine, but they never told me that fighting was including.

Later, when police catch you, they forget about you. They won't do anything and that is when you have to deal with the problem on your own. That's what happened to me. They used to tell me things. I thought ahead of time and I almost got into a gang.

I'm not here for that but for driving a car without a license. A friend lent it to be, but it was stolen. I didn't know about it and that's why I'm here. This is all I can share with you about my life and what had happened in it.

-Jose, San Francisco

From The Beat: It's a good sign that this time has helped you to see things more clearly. Stay away from those friends before they make you do something that can mark your entire life. Bad friends won't take you anywhere but to the same place you are or worst. What do you plan to do with those friends? Are you still going to hang out with them? It's your choice! Take right one.

Sobre Mis Pensamientos

Yo soy una persona muy inteligente. Me gustan muchas cosas como jugar basketball. Me gusta bailar y cantar música en Español, me gusta estudiar, y me gusta salir con mis amigos de paseo a todos lados. No tengo amigos malos. Para mí todos son buenas personas y muy inteligentes.

Me cambia los ánimos cuando hablo con mi familia en Honduras. Yo aqui estoy triste encerrado en esta juvenil. Cuando me siento triste me pongo a hacer ejercicio todo el día. Me pongo a pedirle a Dios que me de fuerzas para seguir adelante.

Ahorita me siento muy triste porque no he hablado con mi familia, pero pronto me voy a mi país. Gracias por todo!

From The Beat: ¿Entonces si eres inteligente y te gusta hacer actividades buenas, que estas haciendo aqui? Analiza esta pregunta y esperamos que obtengas una respuesta. Esperamos que te vaya bien cuando llegues a tu país. Recuerda que las cárceles allá no tienen nada en comparación a las de aquí. Aquellos son el mero infierno.

About My Thoughts

I am a very smart person. I like a lot of things. I like to play basketball, to dance and to sing songs in Spanish. I like to study, and hang around with my friends. I don't have bad friends. For me, all of us are smart.

My mood changes when I talk to my family in Honduras. Here I am locked up and sad. When I feel sad, I like to exercise all day. I also ask God to give me the strength to move on with my life.

Right now I feel sad because I haven't talked to my family, but soon I'll be going back to my country. Thanks for all.

-Selvin, San Francisco

From The Beat: If you are smart and like to do positive activities, why are you here? What's wrong? Analyze this question and maybe you get an answer. We hope everything go well to you in your returning to your country. Remember that jail over there don't have any comparison to the ones we have here. Those are hells.

Lo Que Hago En La Cárcel

En la cárcel me la paso leyendo libros, durmiendo, jugando basketball. A veces me la paso aburrido porque no es igual cuando estoy con mi familia.

Cuando salga de la cárcel, estaré unido con mi familia. Espero no regresar a este lugar porque aqui me la paso aburrido. Espero ya no tener problemas con la ley porque en la calle y en los barrios uno se arriesga la vida. Hay que procurar no meterse con la vida loca en los barrios.

From The Beat: ¿Y cómo le vas a hacer para mantenerte alejado de las cosas que te puedan traer a este lugar otra vez? Hablas de posibilidades, pero no hablas de planes. ¿Cuales son?

What I Do In Jail

In jail, I spend my time reading books, sleeping, and playing basketball. Sometimes, I spend very bored because it's not as if I were with my family.

When I get out, I hope to reunite myself with my family. I hope not to come back here because here is very boring. I hope not to have problems with the law because in the streets and hoods, you risk your life. We have to make sure not to get involved with the crazy life in the 'hoods.

-Henry, Marin

From The Beat: How are you going to keep away from those things that bring you back here? You're talking about possibilities, but not about plans. What are your plans?

THE BEAT
WITHIN

Un Consejo De Un Homie

Hace tiempo agarre un consejo malo de mis homies. Era de ir a brincar a un pandillero en la escuela. Eso fue malo para mí porque ahora estoy en la cárcel y aparte de eso estoy lejos de mi familia. No sé porque agarre ese mal consejo estúpido.

Por estúpido no lo pense y ahora me arrepiento de lo que hice. Ahora quiero salir de la cárcel para estar con mi novia junto de nuevo.

From The Beat: Ese no es un consejo sino una mala mavida. Un consejo siempre es algo positivo que pueda guiar a una persona a que tome una mejor decision cuando está un periodo de confusion. Te recomendamos que busques consejos de gente que van por mejor camino, gentes que han vivido la vida y han aprendido de sus errores. ¡Escucha a tus padres!

An Advice From A Homie

About a time ago, I took an advice from one of my homies. It was to jump another gangster in my school. That was bad for me, because now I'm in jail and, besides that, I'm away from my family. I don't know why I decided to take that stupid advice.

For being stupid, I didn't listen and now I regret what I did. Now I want to get out of jail to be with my girl again.

-Duende, Santa Clara

From The Beat: That wasn't an advice but a bad decision. An advice has to be something positive that can guide a person to take the best decision in a period of confusion. We recommend you to take real advices from those who are in good roads, those who have lived life and have gone through the things you are going through right now. Listen to your parents!

Los Amigos Malos

Bueno la primera cosa que les voy a contar es que los amigos nos hacen hacer cosas malas y por eso es que estoy aquí. Ellos te lleban a la perdición. Yo tengo unos amigos que me han llebado a la perdición. Yo he hecho muchas cosas con ellos. Siempre que salgo con ellos, hacen cosas malas. Yo aprendí con ellos todas las cosas.

Unas vez mis amigos me invitaron a tomar y yo fui con ellos y cuando regrese a casa llegue bien enfermo. Ellos me llegaron a ver a casa y me hicieron sentir mal porque solo llegaron a sacarme de la casa.

From The Beat: ¿Te consideras ser un buen amigo o un malo? ¿Si sabes como son y lo que te hacen hacer, por qué sigues con ellos? ¿Seguiras con ellos una vez que salgas? ¡Pensalo! La verdad es que tú deberías de buscar amigos que te pase un libro en tus manos que un toque de marihuana o una cerveza.

Bad Friends

Well, the first thing I'm going to share is that I'm here for friends who make you do bad things. They guide you to perdition. I have some friends that have guided me there. I've done many things with them. Every time I go out with them, we do bad things.

One time, my friends invited me to drink, I left with them, and when I came back home, I was very sick. They came back to my house to make me feel bad because they took me out again.

-Marlon, San Francisco

From The Beat: Do you consider yourself being a good or a bad friend? If you know how they are and what they make you do, why are you still with them? Are you still going to kick it with them once you're out of here? Think about it! You should consider friends who can pass a book to your hands instead of a joint of weed or a beer.

Lo Que Me Considero

Yo soy una persona que cuando se propone sus metas no descanza hasta no lograr lo que quiero. Me considero una persona que esta dispuesta a ser lo que quiero hacer en mi vida. Soy amigable, pero tengo mi caracter y me enojo muy rápido. Trato de controlarlo y de no ser violento.

Mis amigos me aconsejan que haga las cosas bien, en no meterme en problemas, y que siempre piense en Dios. También me aconsejan que salga adelante de todas las cosas que hayan en la vida.

From The Beat: A ver, cuales son tus metas? Escríbelas y cumplelas. Demuestra lo dicho con hechos no sólo palabras. Y por última, hazle casos a tus amigos, porque estan correctos.

What I Consider Myself

I am a person that when I set goals I don't rest until I accomplish them. I consider myself a person ready to do become what I want to become in life. I am very friendly, but I have a short temper and I get mad easily. I tried to control it and not be violent tough.

My friends advise me to do things right, not to get into problems, and to always think about God. They advise me to always continue to move on no matter what I find ahead in my life.

-Do The Do, San Francisco

From The Beat: Let's see! What are your plans? Write them down and make them happen. Show what you are made of with happening not just with words. The last thing, listen to your friends because they are right.

No Sé Por Qué

La verdad es que yo tengo 18 años y aún se me hace difícil decir quien soy en verdad. Soy una persona pesimista y llena de odio, con pensamientos malos sobre hacer daño a la gente y hasta hacerme daño a mí mismo.

A veces pienso que yo no puedo querer a nadie porque no he aprendido a quererme a mí mismo. Yo solo me hago daño. A la misma vez, yo siento que quiero salir adelante y pienso que sí me quiero y quiero a alguien. Cuando me siento así soy una persona con tantos sueños. Por la razón que aún no sé quien soy, es por que mis pensamientos y manera de ser cambia derrepente. Lo peor de todo es que no sé porque.

From The Beat: Deberías de buscar la manera como encontrarte a ti mismo y ver que es lo que realmente quieres para tu vida. Todos tenemos pensamientos malos y buenos, pero hay que buscar en como controlar los pensamientos que puedan hacer caso. Deberías de buscar ayuda profesional que te puedan ayudar a saber quien eres realmente antes que cometa un error que te pueda marcar toda la vida.

I Don't Know Why

The truth is that I am 18 years old and it's hard for me to tell who I really am. I am a pessimistic person full of hate, with bad thoughts of hurting people and even myself.

Sometimes I think that I can't love anybody because I haven't even learned to love myself. I hurt myself. At the mean time, I feel like I want to succeed. I say to myself that I love myself and that I love somebody. When I feel like this, I'm a person of many dreams. I don't know who I am due to changes of my thoughts and way of being. And the worst thing of all is that I don't know why.

-Mario, Alameda

From The Beat: You should find what's inside yourself and see what you really want for your life. We all have good and bad thoughts running through our heads almost all the time, but we have to find a way to control the thoughts that can harm the life of others. You should do the same thing too. You should find professional help that can help you before you make a mistake that can mark your whole life.

Dear The Beat

I often wish I could be heard, make a difference, make someone think. But I'm just one tiny voice, insignificant. What could I actually do to contribute? I think if words could change the world, could I write them? What I think, what I feel, what I do, matters so much as I exist and to those I encounter. I see so much that is not the way it should be, but who would listen to me, a felon, a schizophrenic about what would change if this world were mine?

This Last Hug

The look in my father's eyes
 As I was ushered out of sight
 The guard said, "Hug him and say your goodbyes"
 He later told me he wished he could hug his father again
 Guilt sets in and then I begin
 To break down everything in mine
 My short existence
 Life experience and repentance
 But when I received my sentence
 It broke his heart
 For me it was a start
 To take hold of the rest of my life
 The pain I've caused forgiven
 But I go on livin'
 In the wake of my lifestyle
 Too few smiles for the past
 Were it the last hug
 Enough to change the heart of a thug
 The future wide open
 Hopin' I can make up for wrongs
 Forever is too long
 And there's never a goodbye
 To get it right! I can only try

Socially Conscious

The issues we're scared to address
 Corruption in congress
 The oil hungry White House
 Stolen first time with Jeb's prowess
 Private contractors in Iraq
 Contracts to rebuild before the attack
 Friends and family never coming back
 Trouble in worldview
 Those willing to do the rigid thing too few
 Genocide in Darfur
 If there were
 Monetary gains to be made
 The political machine would rush in to get paid
 If we want to police
 Let's police for peace
 Feed the hungry, house the poor
 Socialize health care and there would be more
 People getting the help they need
 A country run by greed
 Prison society, modern day slavery
 Police brutality, verbal bravery
 The new movement
 Humanity improvement
 We've got to address these issues
 Or cry it goodbye, our freedom in tissues
 Tears for a country stolen slowly over years
 Or take it back before another superpower decides to attack

This next poet is a great one... We know because he's been published in *The Beat* several times before. This week he reaffirms our belief that he's a great poet by showcasing his outstanding versatility. He writes everything from being a stranger to himself to hugging his father at the end of a visit. And with each poem the door is inched open wider and wider and he lets us into his heart. He takes us on a tour through his thoughts and by the end of our 'sight-seeing' we are continually amazed at the other side. He's writing from the Pennsylvania Department of Corrections in Camp Hill, Pennsylvania. It's our pleasure to be able to read such a mastermind at work.

What I'm Here For

The heat is hot
 Fire breath of a shot
 Bullet glowing red
 As it spins past my head
 And two more follow
 Stunned, dazed
 With a gun, crazed
 I return intentions
 Time in full suspension
 This is all I've got
 Shot for shot
 All I'm taught
 All I know
 Out the window
 As I fight for my life
 Tonight
 Changes me forever
 No one died
 But something inside
 Made me realize
 It's time to get wise
 God watches over us
 And he saved two lives
 By grace many more
 Avidly searching the rest of my life
 Exactly what I'm here for

Stranger To Myself

I face myself in a cell alone
 I've grown into my own
 In this way
 In a day freedom forsaken
 Taken from society
 A danger
 Stranger to myself
 It's hard dealing with what I've become
 I strive to overcome
 As I hold fast to beliefs forgotten
 A child turned rotten
 Rage of a man
 A span of life without light
 I try to forgive myself
 Alive I feel
 Pain too real
 I steal my soul back

Physically Scarred

It's a delicate balance
 Between shades of grey, black, and white
 Day, dawn, dusk, and night
 In the twilight stars sparkle
 Remarkable respect for beliefs and principles
 Somewhere in the middle of complex and simple
 She stands, plans, folded hands and guidance
 Driven by inspiration
 Given a free nation, marred
 Soul strong, physically scarred

The New Age Of Philosophy

Article: To the people that a just nations power of authority belongs, serves, and lies...

Addressing the people of the communities physical and internal cries and wishes for change.

-Answer And Response-

Opening: Throughout human history and nature it has been widely acknowledged that parental first duties of guardianship, along with all known, reproductive organisms is to ensure the protection, teaching and overall survival of their youth, offspring and future generations at all cost! Therefore I conclude regardless of any social conditioning, or environmental circumstances, the responsibility falls in the hands of those that obtain parental and leadership positions.

The Guardian's Agreement: International guardianship agreement, should serve as a symbolic message as well as a token for life in the fight and enslavement of our offspring, followed by every righteous guardian and parent self-pledgments in a new recommitment towards unity indeed! We must place all deterrence aside on the (foundational principle) that our issues remain unbiased and further refuse to distinguish between ethnicity, gender or belief systems, furthermore, systematically we must intelligently unite under one single common cause and objective, in-order to reach, teach, and save our future generations from all out destruction (repeatedly) independently and self-sufficiently.

But critically more important, unitedly, leaderships consisting of all walks of life must join ranks, whether it be politicians, psychologists, scholars, doctors, musicians, the wealthy as well as the less fortunate including representatives from the street element, must all learn to work out community problems together on the correct path for a true nation, as well as distinguishing the deterrence between destruction and prosperity, modification from poisonous subsistence and life, from self-destructive mechanisms, which not only manifest inside of the obvious, impoverish, war torn jungles in our communities, but also effectively waged throughout our political, social and economic institutions as well.

So here and now, this philosopher, guardian, and parent challenges, other leaders, parents, and guardians to rise above the ordinary impossible circumstance that our society and the broken system has erroneously placed on our backs, (becoming other than) is what you tell them! If you have knowledge and further come to understand the great importance of our message and further pledge to become this super impossible human being that society has brought forth upon you... stop! And state (becoming other than) unitedly clench your right hand (making) a tight fist, hard like iron which in turn makes the pledge and become much more real, effective and sincere.

Place it over the heart and state: I am a wonderful (creation of God and nature) and therefore my life and soul are above and beyond the common wealth interest. I therefore vow the life of my children, my community and my wonderful nation above currency. I hereby swear to protect my community against all forms of aggression and oppression. I also pledge to work with my brothers and sisters ensuring the healing, saving, and prosperity for all of our offspring, as well as taking charge of their social activities, education, and future, even if it means death of me in order to sustain life as a whole, not only to the creator and nature, but also to our selves. We choose life for the whole over for the sacrifice of a few, good over evil and survival before submission. We the parents, guardians, and leaders.

-The Rebirth Of A New Society-

Awaken: Educational institutional establishments, in the shape of our nations political, social and economic front. Wise institutions of learning is of vital importance for the

Writing from Calipatria State Prison in Calipatria, CA, we give you this first time writer for The Beat Without section. He sends us a piece he calls, "The New Age Of Philosophy," and in it he speaks a whole lot about his beliefs. And his beliefs are pretty strong a may be a bit controversial, but they are his beliefs and we respect his opinion. He's basically challenging us leaders, parents, and educators to understand those that choose to learn from us before we go and give them information. And we can't argue with that. Let us know what you think because we're sure this won't be the last time we hear from this writer.

building of any nation, as well as to maintain its survival. Powerful knowledge shapes the human consciousness, and subconscious mind and overall mentality, in which creates the ideal of human culture as well as its perceptions, casting a light or shadow over the levels of understandings and interpretations pertaining towards every aspect of life. Therefore, metaphorically what has been digested shall indeed return in the reekness of good or evil sophisticatedly or pure ignorance.

I was recently asked by a comrade (was it factual that environmental conditions, in most cases, shape the nature and consciousness of a person?) I quickly replied (of course it does in most cases, but it's not the consciousness of the person that determines their conditions, but to the contrary, the social environment that produces the nature of the person.) Eagerly, more than anything my purpose for my political dialog is to correct the constant falsifications that sadly linger inside of our communities, such as on the grounds of a person may come out of a dangerous social background, doesn't necessarily mean they'll be incapable of learning or being taught. But more of what or how they are being mentally orientated on the grounds of being educated into society. Currently it is contrary causing greater destruction. I'll clarify, weapons do not murder people, but rather that inner nature of the persons soul that expresses the desire to take the life of another.

Now imagine a corrupted empire that's producing educational foundations that creates a multitude of evil, demonic people such as (Adolf Hitler). Surely he didn't just fall from the sky with his evil plan. He was orientated from a structured learning institution of self-superiority above others, and actually believed that his actions and decisions were in fact "correct," along with the support of his people. That is the dangers of a corrupted learning institution.

Now returning back to matters of education. It must reflect the structure of the people that it intends to reach and materially, literally grilled inside their heads. Unity must be taught, as well as good values and every person's obligations to their communities, outside of these very mandatory factors, parents must seek out their children's talents, and not press them away from it, nor allow themselves to do so. Everything after finding their talents should be in fact secondary to round them.

Teachers, parents, and mentors must all work together, to ensure that the message is received and effective. Now addressing the dysfunctional impoverished factions that are uneducated, accept for there on common realities, adults and adolescents. Then our jobs become very complex especially to the helper that lacks patience, love and a complete understanding to the social conditions that which governs the nature of the people. But the answer that the so-called intellectuals are seeking stands directly in the face of them all. The wise instructor or parent uses manipulation of the situation in order to achieve their objective (by first openly) recruiting a person of that social nature, of course not any ol' body but well respected amongst their peers, and capable of recognizing their environmental social conditions.

Combining this mixture will create fertile ground that will by nature naturally attract its intended target element. I'll clarify. (Would not a gun lover stop at a chance to observe a new gun? Or one that is overtaken by a woman or cars, furthermore adapting to the nature that's already before you, that the teacher, parents, and mentors create an effective solution to the dilemmas of their communities. Stop going against nature,

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but go with it sophisticatedly. Moreover the realities continue to remain the same, all the people are begging for a change. But what they failed to realize, is that with change and education comes along with a major decrease in self-community violence, meaning that a community is awakening to the falsifications and deceptions that has been intentionally placed in their paths for the advantages, wealth and empowerment for others. Indeed no two power structures that conflicts can both co-exist. It has constantly been held that the rise of one nation only means the downfall of another's.

-Understanding The Gang-Tribal Mentality-

The importance cannot be stressed enough to the extent that social conditioning plays into the characterizing of human behavior or just maybe leaders have already acknowledged the severity of the situation. And based on the complexity of the situation, they become absolutely mentally defeated or has erroneously chosen an alternative rout which in turn blames all of the nations deficiency on the youth and system created elements so to say, which is both incorrect in both fact finding and in theory. Tribal violence or conflict, rather has naturally existed in every form of society, but under the U.S.A. particular circumstances of gang violence didn't just fall out of the skies, nor has it reached the tormented brutal level of violence it has reached over night.

Compared to all other living things, there are steps and processes that must be taken into consideration. These new cultural products of their social environments are an example and reflection that shed light on a broken system. That which many people continuously avoid speaking on or breeze around it briefly and cowardly blame the people that is infected with the virus, instead of the ones that control every aspect of our life and injecting the people with deadly poisonous substance openly, but you would rather place the blame on Adolf Hitler's victims indeed, metaphorically. A true nation's (man's) responsibility for its successful people as well as the unsuccessful ones, it is falsification to control the economics and create an unequal division of class and then claim that every one is equal in opportunity, "yet" like the government, they do not assist in providing a means for success for the less fortunate other than fancy talk. It is false doctrine to obtain political control over any nation's structure, but then go and blame the people for its mismanagements of the system. The political post as well as the economic structure controls social conditions for any nation.

Now that we are clear on responsibilities of a government we can properly address our communities down falls. Imagine for a second that you had a cage of puppies, (the cage being the political structure) because it confines the animals living conditions. Now you physically have full authority over what and how much these animals will eat, therefore their whole life structure shall be dependent upon you.

Their entire lives, they were aggravated, starved, and mistreated, would not the majority of the puppies become "mad" as grown dogs? Does not food symbolize lifeline? The case stands as the political front, and the food lifeline becomes the economics. There within itself gives birth to the animals social condition, but into the human form political, economic, and social differences divides us. Like the grown dogs, not all the people shall go mad, despite the hellish conditions in which their social system has subjected them to. But the ones that have are perfectly understandable. Unlike the animal, the human has the opportunity to change. However, does not being denied in opportunities affect a person's livelihood? Then the denial of livelihood is consistent with a threat on one's life, casting them into condemnation, destruction, and savagery, which in fact is a form of war but without so much blood being on the ruler's hands. (At least not in the apparent open sight.)

What the ruler masterminds have neglected to examine is that, inside harsh social conditions, a door becomes open, which shall give birth to a virus that reflects the very neglect in which the masterminds placed upon their subjects. A reflection of injustice, contradiction and falsification at it's extreme.

Now ill becomes more personal. Most African Americans suffer from identity crisis and do not identify with Native Africans. Although they accept the ancestral background, but reject the nature of enslavement as they should, although some find comfort, but majority denounce identifying with White Americans or any other race, which automatically levels the communities clueless as to an identity. So the face of our heritage was left in the hands of divided black political sectors, each embracing the ideal of prosperity and change, but maintains their difference in achieving the same objectives.

There are those that believe that only being accepted as part of a war machine is equality and points of views consist of working within the political structure to create the change they view as being our futures which has yet to be determined, this particular sector believes that accepting repeated assassinations, persecutions, and slaughter is the path to peace, while others fully reject crucifying punishment and see retaliation as just, under injustice. Although I must concede, not to act upon aggression typically goes against nature. Next are the sacrificers that have given their most precious gift, which is their lives to stand up against wrong but continuously go without being honored for these that accepted, and accept being crucified. I am not suggesting that they should not be honored, I am suggesting that all will be nationally honored equally, as the exact right, that sector claim to be peaceful fighting for.

There are those that are confused and follow just whatever sounds correct, and others that are uneducated politically and choose to place the fate of their lives as well as their children's lives in the hands of whatever sounds good or not be involved period. In both political sectors I ask the people to decide who's right and who's wrong? In my opinion neither of them are wrong, we need both in the building of a strong society. No nation can stand on complete war, nor can one stand only on the grounds of peace. I place default on the foolish people that choose or choose not to participate despite our political separations, disagreements and conflicts. Therefore family, community and nations future generations is at stake. How could a person not care? Simply ignorance, mentally defeated and politically divided. This disorganization comes from being dismantled, (a structured disease that cannot operate). In terms of war defeated from a political perspective not a threat, and economically conquered.

They're breeding inside the horrific impoverished social environmental conditionings of circumstances, the ones that are of mixed helpful elements of our social flaws. Naturally once something has been subjected or confined to a certain setting they adapt, creating a new culture that reflects their social realities, then they bring forth desires of that mental state of mind and nature. Especially when poverty and the basic necessities of the people are not being met, which makes their actions under injustice, political (not criminal) because it's based on necessities and survival in order to maintain in a society that demands wealth, and places currency values over human life.

Furthermore, the two black separated of political sectors are both pulling in complete different directions, while accomplishing absolutely nothing but deeper divisions. Both sectors critical in the condiments of generation "X" both refuses to accept true responsibility as a foundation does in all cases. So here we are as eager for success as people looking towards the future, either two things shall indeed transpire, hopefully we can all unite and work towards a better way of life for survival of our future government or we shall slip on the brink of brutal bloody war. Our positions must change, because our social conditions must change. Understand that these elements are becoming stronger and stronger which would make war inevitable. The entire system is constantly over working itself. The state can build as many prison institutions as money can by. That doesn't change the facts that the system is broken, and keeps producing these deadly elements, which create the elements of the urban thug.

Mr. Shadow

Silent as darkness and lonely in life,
 Sacred beside few, though full of strife.
 While lying amongst dead, embracing alive,
 Following what's coming but, hasn't arrive.
 Wishing to be found, only, can't be caught,
 Amidst the good yesterday, already forgot.
 Bringing out your character and personality,
 I've took your step, yet didn't live your reality.
 Been around the world and still not here,
 Could feel you breathing and I'm still not near.
 Though, I've ran your race and fought your battle,
 I'm not you, I'm me, Mr. Shadow.

*Drastically I'm stripped
 of tomorrow's joys,
 Since alone I'll wake in my heart
 missing my boys.*

My Closet

In my closet I drown in effortless tears,
 Draped in pain and constant fears.
 Tired of abuse, am I badly scarred,
 I try hard to smile, but even my smile is hard.
 Who would listen to who can't explain,
 Their bruises and tears of external pain.
 I try to sustain, but my strength is gone,
 Weaken life, a victim whose never done wrong.
 Afraid of my name when spoke,
 This sad clown has no joke.
 Deep inside my closet of darkness and silence,
 Though lonely, I'm free, in this world of violence.

Writing from the California Correctional Institution in Tehachapi, CA, we give you this very insightful poet. He introduces each piece he sends us so we're going to publish them along with our lil' intro. He says "Mr. Shadow" expresses how sometimes he feels like a shadow and what the shadow's like. And then he writes a poem about his past called "My Closet." The third poem, and our personal favorite "I Miss My Boys" is him speaking from his heart to his boys. We really enjoyed that one because we know many of us can relate to it — even if we aren't currently incarcerated. And last but certainly not least is "Over Rippled Pond" where his introduction is "I'm not sure where in me it came out from but it just did." It's a trip because there are a lot of us who've experienced exactly what he's saying. This is a great poet and we're sure everyone who reads will enjoy.

Our Rippled Pond

Time arrives to leave upon its unending path,
 As does the sun which warms the sparrows bath.
 Life echoes, reflects, and impresses,
 Boundaries break, limitations eradicate as life flexes.
 Voices are silent as words take on form,
 Unsoaked I lay through rain, through storm.
 A dream, reality, even a glimpse beyond,
 Our skip, our splash, our rippled pond.

I Miss My Boys

Past and present is where many hearts depart,
 Though our youth is proof, we were close at heart,
 I argue with life, mad at present today,
 For along life's journey we've cast, solo, astray.
 Drastically I'm stripped of tomorrow's joys,
 Since alone I'll wake in my heart missing my boys.
 Though, I ponder, the reasons I already know,
 Deep in my heart I feel already let go.
 Between us lie miles harboring broken stone,
 As do memories, no longer thought our own.
 Through contemplation destiny won't render the past,
 Now remains un-embraced outcast.
 In ponderence, of who I am, and truly miss,
 I miss my boys and sadden it came to this.
 Though I pray to one day arrive at your door,
 With this prayer, I've come to miss you more.

TODD J. TOUGHILL

Mother'd Time

I walk in rows of faded ocean blues
 My belly rich and hard with starch
 I gaze through the haze
 past the cyclone razors
 and through the motion lasers

 Black brown and reddish veins
 sprout from their limestone and dirty beds
 covered in their excrement.
 They carry their cargo downward
 sharing with the thirsty
 and saving for the womb.
 Tis' Mother Earth!
 And she is prepared for birth!
 With deep breaths she flaunts her freedom
 In the breeze I hear her hum
 It is the pounding of her heart
 which raise my limbs to this march
 It is her cadence that allows my blood to flow
 inside of this new role

 For I am alive, as she is
 For I am spawning new life as she is

Writing from Corcoran State Prison in Corcoran, CA, we give you this first time writer for The Beat Within. He was referred to us by the Human Kindness Foundation and we're more than pleased that they referred him because he's an excellent poet. He hits us with a poem called "Mother'd Time" where he observes mother-nature while being incarcerated. He paints very vivid images throughout this poem and we think that's the mark of a great poet — one that can put the reader where he is or where he wants the reader to be. Let's hurry up and get this in the mail so he can see exactly what his poetry looks like in The Beat.

I let death
 Give onto creation as she does.
 For I am free
 of needs to feed
 to clothe
 or pay the rent.

The State Has Providith!

And in these shoes and beds
 I am given mother'd time
 to search for riches...

What Are Mine?

*19 yrs on this earth and committed more sins than a war
 I feel ashamed at myself for takin' up the role as hardcore*

Confessing My Sins?

Lord can you see it in my young eyes?
 All the silent pain I hold deep inside
 The things that I've been through and the things that I've done
 The sins that I've committed weigh me down by the ton

But can I confess my sins and truly be forgiven?
 I did serious things and I really shouldn't be livin'
 In the Bible it says what goes around comes around
 Well my goes around should equal for me not to be around

To confess my sins out my mouth I don't think I've got the guts
 For a normal person to hear I'll don't think they'll have the guts
 All my life I've fought to conquer my fears
 At a very young age I've lost count of my countless tears

But it seems the world is never at peace
 Poverty overtaking families, as innocent kids die in the streets
 Then they wonder why we turn to the gun to survive
 Misguided from the start straight into the fast life

To walk a day in my shoes I'll guarantee you'll crumble
 Because my conscious is so heavy from the jump you'll fumble

On the outside I'm looking solid as steel
 But on the inside, I have spiritual cuts that won't heal

I'm in a spiritual war zone without my vest
 And sometimes when I sleep and dream I see death
 What would it profit me to keep singing in whole?
 Why at the same time the devil's slowly taking my soul

I used to try and make excuses on why I live the way I do
 But none of them excuses made sense
 Because I knew what's really true
 Life is a struggle that every individual must carry
 All we could do is wish for the tales that start with "fairy"

My past life and sins are things I want to forget
 But no matter how hard I try the devil won't let me forget
 19 yrs on this earth and committed more sins than a war
 I feel ashamed at myself for takin' up the role as hardcore

I don't regret my sins because it made me who I am today
 I got to utilize my past to make me a better way
 But if I confess to God all my sins
 Will he understand this youngsta and really forgive him?

One of our favorite thinkers and writers of all time is back in our pages and if you can't tell by now, we are very happy to hear from him. We first met him as a very challenging and close-minded youngster with strong beliefs in our Alameda County Juvenile Hall workshops and then he even got out and remained our friend by coming to work with us in the office. But now he writes to us from the Deuel Vocational Institution in Tracy, CA. He sends us two poems that remind us of why we miss him so much. He's still the same ol' Chris, but now he's way more open-minded and we can tell by how his writing has evolved since we first met him. He confesses his sins and then he poses the question — what do you see when you look at me? It's always a pleasure to hear from Chris and hopefully he'll keep in touch throughout his journey. We miss you Lil' Chris...

Look At Me?

I'm just a youngsta in the game with my head on right
 Spittin' the realest out my mouth been laced up real tight
 I'm still a teen, but equally rated as an old G
 That's why haters steady envy me doing me

Some people say I know too much for my own good
 But if they knew the definition of my life, it would be understood

I say old schooled the new, and new schooled the old
 I live by family morals and what I was taught and told

I'm a 80's baby, 88's the year
 No more sorrow and pain that's why I shed a tattoo tear
 Life's cold grits and then you pass away and die
 That's why I live it to the fullest why I'm still alive

People say I'm like a puzzle too complicated to figure out
 But everybody wants a peek at me to see what I'm about
 So now that you got a peek tell me what is it you see?
 What's the first thing that comes to mind when you look at me?

CURIOUS GEORGE

We used to have this next writer in our Alameda County Juvenile Hall workshops, but now he's moved on to ROP in Yerington, Nevada. He sends an update on where he is and what he's doing over there. We're pleased to hear that he's on the verge of graduating high school because "you can get yo' credits hella fast up there" and he's also going to be learning a trade. We're glad to hear from him and hope he'll keep us in mind the next time he wants to "bring back memories."

Bringing Back Memories

G-vo Beat, greetings to every Beat reader and writers this is your homie Curious George from Hayward, California, A.L.A.C.O I used to be in D-Unit "The Dogg Pound." The old juvenile hall.

Whoever reads this if you know Nero, Saphere, Mrs. Brockswillis, Baker, Old School, Henry or Bradley tell them that Jaimes said, what's up! But yeah, to all that are locked up keep real to your peeps and your varrio, I've been in and out of juvenile hall since 2003, now I am 18 in R.O.P in Nevada. I got my Ram but I lost it. I have seven more weeks to get my Ram again.

Its pretty cool out here you earn a lot of school credits and you get healthy. You also learn a trade. I'm in a gang, its hard to stay away from it so if you're thinking of joining a gang please do yourself a favor and don't join one because in my eyes if you get in, there's no way out, and if you get out, to me you're a coward.

So to all you youngsta's think before you act. I get out in five months on my nineteenth (19) B-day. I just can't wait to be with my lady La Mickey I love you Jessica.

Having Faith In God

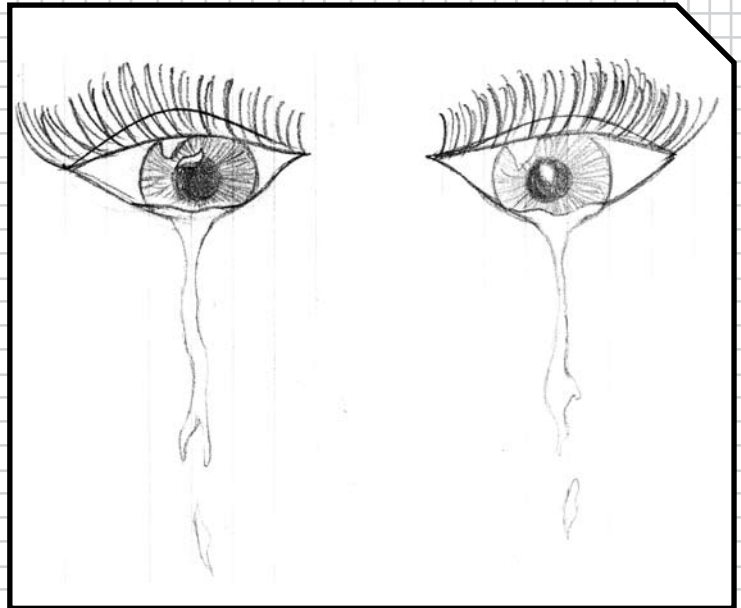
Faith is a small word but there are many great meanings behind this word called faith. My Oxford College dictionary, defines the word faith as complete trust and confidence in someone or something to strong belief in God or in the doctrines of a religion, based on spiritual apprehension rather than proof. A system of religious belief a strongly held belief or theory these are all the meaning of faith that my dictionary had giving to me, but having faith is something that goes deep.

I hear a lot of people speak of how they do have faith in God and that's something I hear all the time in prison, but to be honest about it, it ain't many people in prison, who has real faith in the creator 'cause many people question God as to why does he allow bad things to happen to them. Why does he make them suffer, one thing I learn never question the works of God. A man of faith, knows that God is on his side. And he always trusts in him. No matter what situation he is placed into 'cause I learn all about true faith from reading the Bible 'cause the book of James 1-2, states my brother count it all joy when we fall into trials. 3. Knowing that the testing of our faith produces patience. Patience is one of the main keys to having faith. Being able to wait on God, as he let his plan unfold in our life, on his own timing.

James 1-6 says, but him ask in faith, with no doubting. For who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. That's why when I pray and ask God to help me in some kind of way. I don't expect him to provide things to me right then and there and I have faith with prayers. Now no matter what the cause may be I will wait on that day that God open up all doors for me and whatever plan God has for my life is the plan that I am down with, but I am not going to lie. It have been times where my faith has been a lil' shaky, but that's when I fall into prayers, and ask the Lord, to strengthen my faith in him and the book of Hebrews chapter 11 also has taught me a lot about faith and having faith in the works of God cause faith is the substance of things hoped for the things not seen and Hebrews chapter 11-3 states we understand that the worlds were formed by the word of God, cause by faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. Through which he obtained witness that he did not see death and was not found because God had taken him. Before he was taken by God. He had this testimony, that he pleased God, but without faith it is impossible to please him. For he who comes to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of those who diligently seek him.

By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen moved with Godly fear, prepared an ark for saving of his house holds, by which is according to faith. By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called by God to go to the place which he would receive as an inheritance, and he went out not knowing where he was going by faith he dwelt the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise. For he warned for the city which has foundations whose builder and maker is God. By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, cause she judged him faithful who had promised and these are people who had faith and trust in God promise to them and they saw that promise to it's fullest.

We are so very pleased to feature this writer in this issue of The Beat Within. He always sends us many great pieces and poems and with each one he sends we learn more and more about what makes this man so great. He's writing from the Union Correctional Institution in Raiford, Florida. And as you'll be able to tell from his writing he has the utmost faith in God. He also sends a wonderful tribute to a friend and an even more outstanding tribute to his mother. There's not much more we can say to introduce this great thinker, but we do hope you find the time to read what he has to say because it brightened our day and we know it will do the same for you.



He Lead My Way

God lead my way each day
As I fall on my knees to you as I pray God you lead my way.

When my mind sometimes goes blank
And you bless me with the will to think.

God you lead my way.

When I am in need for some spiritual direction
You provide to me your Godly protection.

God you lead my way

As the spiritual light shines

As I search for the truth you is what I will find.

God you lead my way and treat me fair
Always letting me know you will be there.

God lead my way because I trust in you.

God lead my way cause you give me desire of your heart,

God lead my way and allow me to be sill and patient.

God lead my way as you teach me the value of prayer.

God you lead my way as you free me out of bondage of darkness.

God you lead my way as you help me see the plan you have for my life

It is unfolding right before my eyes.

God you lead my way when I do take the time out
To search the scripture for a better understanding of the right way. God you lead my way as I work on myself
And battle with Satan from moment to moment.

God you lead my way as I get near to judgment day
Helping me to keep in mind that judgment can bring blessing

And reward just as it can also bring destruction.
God you lead my way in my times of trouble and lift me up like no other. God you lead my way.

Making A Life For Myself Even In Prison

Prison life is what I have been experiencing for over 19 years now. I came in just turning 18 years old, young and buck wild, very arrogant and aggressive, not knowing better cause all that was on my mind was I had to spend the rest of my life behind prison gates cause Tampa, Florida judge name Harry Lee Coe had given life and some to do in prison.

After just getting out of prison from doing almost a four year bid away from one year in the boys school and three years in prison and I had felt like life was over with for me I really did not want to live anymore and on the other hand I was not ready to die cause I felt I was too young to die so I was not about to take myself out the game and for the first few years I was wilding all the time, fighting every chance I got going in and out of lock up not really caring about much, but in my heart I did not want to just give up like that cause something kept telling me in the back of my mind that life does not stop right here, but that was something I did not have much knowledge of at the moment cause I had not lived long enough to know a whole lot about life, but I knew that prison was not the place where I wanted to spend the rest of my life at, but many of my youthful years was wasted in prison. Fighting all the time thinking I had to always prove a point when I could have been using all of that same time and energy to educate and make a life for myself cause I had known some old timer who had to spend a great number of years in prison, and at the moment they had to spend the rest of they life in prison, but they was in prison and they had a lot going for them and after seeing and learning from them was enough for me to know that life did not stop right here in prison and I was determined to make a life for myself right here in prison, but I was still hard headed.

I had trouble with keeping my ego in check and I was always a real emotional type person and I was told many times by some good friends of mine that I needed to learn how to control my emotions cause many of them saw very good potential, qualities, abilities to develop into something in the future, but on the inside of me I still had built up anger, bitterness that I had been holding for years and at times reality was slipping away from me and for more years than I can count I kept stumbling over the same mistakes. In my heart I wanted to do better and be better and as time kept passing me by I somewhat went to learning how to do time and not let time do me, but it was always something

within, kept struggling to make a change and kept me finding away to make a life for myself right here in prison cause life being about a chance and I went to seeing that it was not over with for me because I had life in prison and in the early part of 1996, I was placed into close management lock down which is called C.M. all one man cell lock down, and at that time I did not think I was going to end up spending 12 years of my life, lock down in a one man cell almost the same size as someone bathroom and the whole time I was into a big Tuger was with myself.

One part of me which is my ego mind and that evil spirit always telling me I had a point to prove pushing me to be violent and always have the I don't care kind of attitude and for a while I was like most prisoner afraid of change cause it was something very difficult for me to do and sometime painful and most people shy away from such situations but life kept putting me in a situation that force me to change for the better, but I knew that all things was possible through the works of God, but at times I felt that I had did things for so long and been such a complete failure, I thought I could not do better, but now I am finding my way cause I want my life to change and while being locked down on C.M. in a one man cell.

I have learn the value of studying to improve my mind and spirit and I'm rehabilitating myself for myself, but I'm still being judged by my past and while on C.M. I learn to read a lot and I never thought that books could have such a great impact on me to the point where I am at cause Malcolm X believed in the power of words to influence and transform lives. His own life stands as a affirmation of that power and I have read books by Malcolm X that have helped me along the way with making a better life for myself while in prison and most of my day revolves around recovery and spiritual practice and working out the body and mind cause I have learned from reading and studying that everything has mind in the lead has mind in the force front is made by mind if one speaks or acts with a corrupt mind misery will follow. The wheel of the cart follows the fool of the ox and in this prison environment I have lived in for years encourages violence, verbal abuse, scheming, and deception and each day I struggle very hard not to get caught up into that kind of life style cause in order for me to be happy where I am at. I must keep watering the seeds of mindfulness. Compassion, and meditation in prison and the process with making an life for myself while in prison does not start later it starts now.

Attachments

Many desires is what attachments and attachments brings about suffering. When born into this world I was free and without attachments. I was more closer to my true nature then anything cause I did not have and knowledge of all the many attachments the world had to offer me and now the world around me. The more I grew up in this world the more attachments I became to so many things of this world cause me to suffer time after time. Such as greed, hatred, ignorance, money, sex, cars, jewelry, food, and drugs and so much more and these attachments is what keep most people in the world in bondage making them slaves to these attachments keeping they life headed up a brick wall.

I Treasure My Mother

Mother I treasure you mother I thank you for all of your help and the tender loving and caring moment you have given to me. Mother I treasure cause you are the best cause when it came to us you never settle for less and I say us I mean Tiffany, Sedrick, and me. Your only three. You are to me the greatest of all cause your love never changed for us even after taking many down falls mother I treasure you through it all and many times thinking of you have been my wake up call and your love for me show in all that you do. That's my reason for saying how much I treasure you. You are special and your love is what I will always treasure without measure. Mother I treasure you because you stood by my side. When I was not able to stand by my own side. And your true feelings for me is something you would never hide. I treasure you because when true love seemed so hard time. You was always there giving me a good time. I treasure my mother like I treasure no other.

Desires Of My Heart

My heart has one big desire and that's to bring myself back to my true nature and live as righteous as I possible can and my heart is all good from the start cause all the good things I have done comes from the heart. My ego mind and bad ways that I have picked up in the world or not something that my heart desires me to do cause everything I make some kind of bad choice from angry emotions or from my ego mind. To hurt someone or do something wrong I feel bad on the inside cause I know them acts or not of my heart desires so much goodness. It just most of the time I do not follow my heart. Many times in prison I have heard people say that's what been in your heart, and I don't agree with that cause when I get and I tend to do and say things I don't mean, but my angry words and action are connected with what's in my heart and proverbs 4:23 says guard my heart for it is the well spring of life and the heart is the root of me cause my heart desires me to be the best I can be. In just about everything I do my heart desires me to be at peace with myself and the world that's around me, my heart desires me to forgive and love the one's who hate me, my heart desires me to keep it real myself. So I could keep it real with others. My heart desires me to be kind to my enemy. My heart desires me to always be calm and content. My heart desires me to be prepared for whatever God had in store for me. My heart desires me to have good humor, strength, and courage.

What Your Friendship Means To Me

And one your friendship means so much to me more then simple words can say so. More than anyone in this world could ever know and I live for each moment just to see our friendship grow. To me you are a very wonderful person young and with a strong mind making us two of a kind and in prison true friends like you are hard to find your friendship will forever be mine your friendship I see, your kind ways, I will always know.

Together you and me will do all we can to make our friendship grow, grow, grow and the true meaning of friendship is something that will always be carried on even when we leave this world to be gone. In my heart soul and mind with your friendship I will never be alone your friendship is warm and comes with an understanding your love and loyalty as a friend I will always be demanding and you have showed me firm and constant support remaining loyal as a friend that's why my love for you will last to the end, and our true friendship will never bend.

Now you are on the other side if the gates, and I want you to know your friendship I will always appreciate. You come into my life up out of no where, and embraced me with much care, and showed me how a true friend suppose to be there. So just real and every now and then put a letter in the air. So things could be fair cause your friendship means so much to me.

Jail House Negation

In jail they are quick to say that someone has jail house religion:
 But who are they to judge another person's personal decision?
 Assuming that
 It's just a facade:
 Obviously they don't know
 Our loving God.
 Because it doesn't matter where anyone gets saved at:
 God is the one who decided that..
 Becoming kingdom minded changes a persons mentality:
 From living in darkness to seeing reality...
 So if God saves a person in jail:
 A strong testimony they will have to tell..
 Because you have to be broken in order to yield:
 And then that void God can fill.
 So even if it does seem strange:
 Be happy for the person who wants to change..
 Because if their new found hope is what it takes:
 Pray that they don't continue to make the same mistakes.
 So instead of jail house negatism:
 start praying for another to stop the recidivism!

RHONDA JONES

No need to do a double take, you are seeing very clear, for even though we haven't heard from Spiritual Gangsta in a long time she's still very special to us, so we're always happy to hear from her. Especially when she shares news like she did in her letter this time. We are glad to inform you that since Rhonda's release she's gotten a job, started a prayer pen pal group that we will give you the address to in a minute, and has been reunited with her kids. We could tell that this woman had a vision and now she's doing everything in her power to live that vision. This week she hits us with two very incredible poems. The first, "Mail Call," is about how special receiving mail while you're incarcerated is. And we know anyone who's been locked up will be able to relate to this one. Then, she concludes with a poem titled "Jailhouse Negation," which is about the unnecessary and irrelevant criticism people receive when they find God while incarcerated. She really is a great woman who we've been blessed to meet through paper and pen. If you would like to write her pen pal group, the address is: Prayer Partner Pen Pals, Sis Rhonda Jones 3345 Meadowmont Lane Richmond, Virginia 23234... We appreciate the update Rhonda and we definitely look forward to the next time we hear from you again...

Mail Call

The most important thing in jail:
 Is not when you get money, but when you get mail...
 The words are like diamonds
 The papers fine gold:
 A message of love
 A wonder to behold...
 Making you feel that you're the greatest:
 As they update you on all the latest.
 Comforting you through your ordeal:
 By showing you how they keep it real.
 So you don't feel rotten:
 Because they show you that, you're not forgotten.
 But the second thing, that's even better:
 Is when you get money and mail together...

I started this ministry in Oct. '04 and I've been writing faithfully to anyone who wants a Prayer Panther Pen Pal.

Life Over-rater

I have nothing to care for.
 No one gives a damn about me
 My eyes so blinded by tears, I can't even see.
 No future, no present, and judged by my past
 Life it's over rated — love it never last.
 So I write these things
 'Cause as a coward I can't "just do it"
 Hoping someone sees, hears, or feels my pain
 And tries talking me through it
 Death — it's on my mind twenty-four-seven
 But again I'm scared 'cause for me there's no heaven
 Just heart ache and pain — life's worthless feeling
 Everybody's given up — life has no meaning-
 Lord take me please — to the place I deserve
 Six feet underground with a head stone, these words...

"No more tears, no more pain, no more false dreams
 Life over-rated — not what it seems.
 No future, no present, not even a past
 Life for me, glad it's over, 'cause love never last."

Now girl, please don't cry — they're just wasted tears
 My life hasn't had meaning, in all of my years
 So if ever one day, you feel this same way
 Remember me then and just feel my pain

This next first time writer was really touched by issue 12.32 and decided to send us a couple of his poems. He was particularly touched by a love poem written by Cupcake because he says that she wrote in her poem everything he wanted to say to his girlfriend, but just couldn't find the words to say it until reading her poem. This week, we're welcoming him with open arms as he shares a poem titled, "Just A Dream" and another one titled, "Life Over-rater." In Just A Dream he touches on how important it is to receive mail from the ones you love, especially romantically because being in prison means being physically and romantically isolated from the opposite sex. He's really an outstanding poet and we are excited to see how his relationship with us will flourish. He's writing from San Quentin State Prison in San Quentin, CA. Thank you for letting us touch your heart and mustering up the strength to touch ours in return.

Just A Dream

Two smiling faces, laughter, delight
 Holding hands, soft kisses, under moonlight
 Red and blue lights, sirens that sound
 Handcuffs and jail bars, no one around.
 Your world is shattered, in jail you sit
 30 minutes ago, this scene wouldn't fit
 Missing her already, you wonder does she know
 How much you love her, 'cause you never said so.
 Wondering, confused, is it too late
 Shall you write her a letter, try to tempt fate
 Then out of nowhere, under the door a note slides
 It's a message for you with a letter inside
 It says she loves you and she'll be true
 Then you wake up in cold sweats, look at the floor — no mail
 for you
 Reality — Life stinks

GREGORY VALDEZ

Writing from Folsom State Prison in Sacramento, CA, and addressed to someone who either no longer works here or never worked here before, we bring you this veteran Beat Without writer. His higher power is very influential in his life as he writes three pieces, all of which are definitely speaking about what his higher power means to him in his life. We really appreciate him sharing what's working for him while he's incarcerated because maybe someone will take what he's said and apply it to their own lives.

As You Want To Call It

For some odd reason there is a reason and purpose for everything in life some people want a explanation for what you did and why you did do to it. Is there a price you must have to pay for it? Of course

As you want to call it growing up in the ghetto and having to struggle for a place to stay and food to eat when the rich get richer and the poor get poorer leaving you with a mind with nothing to fear or lose looking for hopes and dreams to come out of the ghetto, or so what they call it the project, it a life you must want to leave from skid row to bank roll as you see

As you want to call it and no one to please but your own self to a new and improved and you driving Lexus's and Beamer's no one could see but your dog is all you need cat and mouse are always running around tables and time will always let you shine with a big family indeed not feeling hopeless to please just being your self and do what you can do just trying to make a life for yourself having kids will always make you win being a star is like a light at night for having this and that does make you being a blessing those in need.

As you want to call it going to jail always trying to build a little and rhyme your song to have to do the time so don't or cough just break it right off when time is severed you must have learned so if you get smart They don't do it again so being on the out you must have a house with a couch were you can always get what you want to eat. It just leave you in peace.

As you want to call it having a heart. A heart it's like a walk through a park there no need to fear. Because you already been there place to place and city to city you know the underdog been there. We know we're not a poet but we must show it so having a life. Don't try to do it twice.

So as you want to call it just be yourself!

Behold He Is Coming

I must tell you it's not about me and this could happen today or tomorrow. Matter of fact we don't know when he is coming to us he will show his tears and he will show us his roar, there will be thunder and lightning in the sky

Behold he shall mercy upon his saviors I ask that we trust him with our pure heart and soul. Let him hear our cry for our forgiveness that we be placed in house above us let him clip the wings on us so we can fly in the sky and be at peace with him let him teach us his ways so we have a sound mind and a sound heart

Behold he is coming because he loves us so we must sing his name and don't be afraid the lord our god the one we trust with our love.

I Know The Lord Know

Lord, Lord I know you know I feel ashamed for the things I did and the people I hurt

Lord, Lord, king of kings, teach me your things and show me how to live so I will always be able to give.

I know the Lord know that my heart has to be pure so show me one life so I won't have to live it twice.

Teach me a lesson so that I grab that blessing as I look at night I see the stars so bright. It's not east or west that I have been put to a test so the lord can give me a good rest.

So I know the lord know.

*To walk a day in my shoes I'll guarantee you'll crumble
Because my conscious is so heavy from the jump you'll fumble
On the outside I'm looking solid as steel
But on the inside, I have spiritual cuts that won't heal*

read the rest of Chris Grajeda's BWO piece on page 59

